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OR THE

JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE  
IN THAT ISLAND,

DURING THE YEARS 1814 AND 1815.

CONTAINING

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURAL PHENOMENA,  
HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND ANTIQUITIES OF THE ISLAND ;  
AND THE RELIGION, CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND  
CUSTOMS OF ITS INHABITANTS.

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BY EBENEZER HENDERSON,

Doctor in Philosophy, Member of the Royal Society of Gottenburgh, Honorary  
Member of the Literary Society of Fuinen, and Corresponding  
Member of the Scandinavian Literary Society at  
Copenhagen.

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*Abridged from the second Edinburgh Edition.*

ILLUSTRATED WITH A MAP AND ENGRAVINGS.

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BOSTON :

PERKINS & MARVIN, 114, WASHINGTON STREET.

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1831.

as they increase its size. It was found, on examination,—at least so the editor thought—that by striking out the passages, embraced under these two descriptions, the real value of the work to most readers, would be enhanced, by the very process of reducing its size and cost. The abridgment has been made in accordance with these views. The more important and interesting portions are preserved entire; and, throughout, the author's phraseology remains unaltered, except in the few cases where slight changes were found necessary in the process of abridgment. The reader, therefore, has before him, not any substitute of the editor's, but the original narrative and descriptions in Dr. Henderson's own language.

I have spoken of this Journal as the best account that we have of Iceland. No other English traveller has spent so much time on that island, or travelled there so extensively, or enjoyed such advantages for becoming acquainted with its inhabitants, as Dr. Henderson. His business—as Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, instructed to investigate and make arrangements for supplying the want of Bibles there—led him into every quarter of the island, and secured for him all the facilities that could be desired, for unreserved intercourse with the people, and for becoming thoroughly acquainted with their character and circumstances. These advantages his previous studies and travels in the north of Europe, and his acquaintance with the language and literature of Iceland, enabled him to turn to the best account. While, therefore, his journeys through extensive and interest-



ing regions by them unvisited, enabled him to give a more complete view of the extraordinary natural phenomena of the country, than any of his predecessors, his narrative also possesses more of *human* interest, arising from the charm of familiar insight into a peculiar cast of character and manners,—from the attractions of a *home* acquaintance with an artless, intelligent, kind, and pious people,—to the American, from the enthusiasm of an ancient liberty like his own,—and to the Christian, from that of philanthropic effort on behalf of a people holding,—in their seclusion from the world, amid wonders of fire and frost—the same faith, and cherishing the same hope, with himself.

Doubtless the more obvious attractions of a work on Iceland are descriptions of inanimate nature. So predominant and extraordinary are the phenomena of this kind, which every where attract the eye of the traveller, that, even in this volume, they will be found to occupy a prominent place on almost every page. “It is impossible for a stranger to take a single step in Iceland,” says Dr. Henderson, in the Preface to his first edition, “without having some uncommon object of this description presented to his view; and in taking down notes of his progress, his principal difficulty lies in the selection of subjects, where such a multiplicity claim his attention. It not unfrequently happens that he is denied the pleasure of seeing a human being, for several days together, when proceeding from one part of the island to another. In crossing the deserts of the interior, he may travel two hundred miles without perceiving the smallest symptom of an animated being

of any description whatever ; and even in traversing the inhabited parts, he still finds himself more surrounded by nature than by human society, owing to the distance from one farm-house to another.”

Yet, if my feelings do not deceive me, there is in the account here given of the *inhabitants* of Iceland, much that the reader will long cherish as matter for interesting and profitable reflection. Dr. Henderson is a traveller of the right sort. To high qualifications as a scholar and a gentleman,—active, indefatigable, accurate in observation, and faithful in description,—he adds the generous spirit and noble aims of a devoted Christian philanthropist. Hence the moral charm of this volume. On every scene, whether of nature or of human society, is thrown light from a higher world. The works of God are recognized as such, and in regard to whatever concerns man, moral relations and influences are never left out of the account. It is in this particular,—this recognition of the relations of the world and of man to a higher Power, that travellers most often fail ; so that, while books of this kind are perhaps more universally read with interest than any other, there are comparatively very few of them that breathe a spirit with which the Christian reader can sympathise, or that the Christian parent can put into the hands of his children, as giving such a view of nature and of human life, as he would wish them to cherish. Indeed, the study of geography, in the larger sense of the word, including the illustrations afforded by books of travel, &c. greatly needs to be *Christianized* throughout.

But this is a subject of too much importance to be entered upon here. The following Journal, in its more prominent characteristics, is an example of what ought to be. A series of works on all the more important portions of the earth, uniting with equal general excellencies, the Christian spirit of this, would be a present to the public, of inestimable value.

THE EDITOR.

*January, 1831.* —

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## GLOSSARY

*Of Icelandic words that occur in the Journal.*

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*Amptman*, deputy governor.

*borg*, fortress, (used like *burgh* in names of places.)

*dal*, valley ; Haukadal, valley of Hauka.

*fiord*, bay, or frith ; Eyafjord, Eya bay.

*fell*, mountain ; Helgafell.

*fliot*, river ; Markarfliot.

*foss*, cascade.

*hraun*, lava.

*heidè*, mountain road.

*hreppstiori*, constable, or bailiff.

*hver* (plural *hverar*), boiling springs.

*landfoged*, steward, or treasurer.

*syssel*, sheriffdom.

*sysselman*, sheriff.

*sira*, sir, father ; title of the clergy.

*surturbrand*, lignite, mineralized wood.

*tún*, the green space around farm houses.

*vatn*, lake ; Arnarvatn.

*wadmel*, coarse woollen cloth, manufactured by the Icelanders, always colored *black*.

*yökul*, ice-mountain.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### *Situation and general aspect of Iceland.*

THE island of Iceland is situated in the Atlantic Ocean, on the confines of the polar circle, between  $63^{\circ} 24'$  and  $66^{\circ} 30'$  of north latitude, and between  $13^{\circ} 15'$  and  $24^{\circ} 40'$  in longitude west of Greenwich.

That this island owes its formation to the operations of submarine volcanoes, is evident from the geological phenomena which every part of it exhibits. In no other quarter of the globe do we find crowded within the same extent of surface such a number of ignivorous mountains, so many boiling springs, or such immense tracts of lava. The general aspect of the country is the most rugged and dreary imaginable. On every side appear marks of confusion and devastation, or the tremendous sources of these evils in the yawning craters of huge and menacing volcanoes. Nor is the mind of a spectator relieved from the disagreeable emotions arising from reflection on the subterraneous fires which are raging beneath him, by a temporary survey of the huge mountains of perpetual ice by which he is surrounded. These very masses, which naturally exclude the most distant idea of heat, contain in their bosom the fuel of conflagration, and are frequently seen to emit smoke and flames, and pour down upon the plains immense floods of boiling mud and water, or red-hot torrents of devouring lava.

Dismal tracts of lava, whose gloom is barely relieved by the columns of smoke that are constantly ascending through apertures and fissures in various parts of their surface, traverse the island in almost every direction.

These tracts are often extremely rugged, consisting of broken and pointed rocks, between which are fissures and chasms of tremendous size, that throw insuperable barriers in the way of the traveller. Rents more than a hundred feet in width sometimes stretch to the length of several miles. In many parts of these lavas, the heat is still so great, that in winter, when the vapor is prevented by the snow from making its escape from the general surface of the ground, it is impossible to enter any of the caverns, on account of the sulphureous smell which they emit.

Another proof of the universality of volcanic agency, and of the continued existence of subterraneous fires in Iceland, is the multiplicity of hot springs in which it abounds. Not that I suppose any direct or immediate communication to be kept up between these springs and some central source of heat; but that some extensive conflagration is going forward below the surface of the earth is evident: and it seems natural to conclude that it has originated in volcanic eruptions, especially as the hot springs are always found in connection with lava or other volcanic matter. Many of these springs throw up large columns of boiling water, accompanied by immense volumes of steam, to an almost incredible height into the atmosphere, and present to the eye of the traveller some of the grandest scenes to be met with on the face of the globe.

Celebrated as this island has been for its volcanoes and hot springs, it is scarcely less remarkable on account of the enormous ice-mountains which occupy a vast portion of its surface. To these mountains the natives give the name of Yökuls, which signify large masses of ice. They have generally terreous and rocky mountains for their basis; and, in many places, exhibit magnificent glaciers, which commence at a great height, and run down with a very rapid descent into the plains. The most extensive of all the Icelandic Yökuls is that called Klofa Yökul, in the eastern quarter of the island. It lies behind the Yökuls and other mountains which line the south-east coast, and forms, with little or no interruption, a vast chain of ice and snow mountains, which are supposed to fill a space of not less than three thousand square miles. Numerous ridges of rugged and irregular mountains stretch

across the interior, and, from these, other inferior mountains branch out towards the coasts, and, in many instances, terminate in high and steep promontories. Between these ridges, in the vicinity of the coasts, are rich and beautiful vallies, in which the inhabitants have erected their dwellings : and many of the low mountains are covered with coarse grass, which affords summer pasturage to the cattle. The coast is indented with numerous bays and inlets ; yet there is scarcely a harbor in the whole island, where vessels can ride with safety. Many large rivers flow from the Yökuls, and in some instances seem to burst in mighty torrents from the mountain side as if that were their immediate origin. They are generally of a whitish color, like milk diluted with water. Smaller streams rise in the low lauds, whose waters are transparent. The whole of the interior, as far as it has been explored, consists of a vast inhospitable desert, traversed in various directions by barren mountains, between which are immense tracts of lava and volcanic sand, with here and there a small spot, scantily covered with vegetation.

At the arrival of the Norwegians, and for several centuries afterwards, pretty extensive forests grew in different parts of the island. Owing, however, to their improvident treatment of them, and the increased severity of the climate, they have almost entirely disappeared ; and what remains, scarcely deserves any other name than that of underwood, consisting for the most part of birch, willow, and mountain-ash ; but this want of indigenous wood is in some measure supplied by the vast quantities of floating timber which are drifted upon the coasts from the American continent.

### *First Settlement, and History.*

Iceland was first discovered by Naddodd, a famous Norwegian pirate, who was driven by a tempest upon its coasts about the year 860. He remained some time, but discovered no vestige whatever of inhabitants. He called it *Snæland*, or the Land of Snow. In 864, Gardar Sva-farson, a native of Sweden, was driven upon the coast in the same way, and spent the winter there. The favorable account which he gave of the island induced Floki, another celebrated pirate, to attempt a settlement upon it.

But he failed through bad management, and abandoned the island in the spring—leaving it the name by which it has ever since been known. In 870 Iceland was visited by Hiörleif and Ingolf, Norwegians, who having wintered there were so well pleased with the country that they returned to Norway with the determination to effect a permanent settlement. This they succeeded in accomplishing in A. D. 874, from which year the Icelanders date the occupation of the country.

Just before this period, Harold the Fair-haired had extended his dominion over all the petty kingdoms of Norway, and deprived the inhabitants of that liberty and independence which they had previously enjoyed. Many of the princes whom he had deprived of their dignity and power, preferred a life of exile to subjection to the tyrant. Accompanied by their families, and a numerous train of dependants, they emigrated towards the west, and formed numerous colonies on the Hebrides, the Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe Islands. To no quarter, however, did they flock in greater numbers than to Iceland: being attracted to that island, on the one hand, by the promising accounts that were circulated respecting its fertility, and stimulated, on the other, by the hopes of being placed in perfect security from the attacks of their oppressor. In little more than half a century, all the coasts around the island were occupied by settlers; and, in order to put a stop to the emigration, King Harold was under the necessity of imposing a heavy fine upon all who left Norway for Iceland.

About the year 928, the inhabitants of Iceland formed themselves into a regular republic; and so admirably did they distribute the different powers of government, that their mutual rights were secured without any compromise of personal liberty. They divided the island into four quarters, agreeably to a division already made in its natural constitution, in each of which a chief magistrate was elected by the free suffrage of the people. Each quarter was subdivided into three prefectures or sheriffdoms, excepting the northern quarter, which, on account of its size, was divided into four. These were governed by an officer, whose duty it was to maintain order within his district; to call an assembly for the trial of public causes;

to preside and judge on these occasions ; and to see that the punishments prescribed by the laws of the republic were carried into execution. He was, at the same time, minister of religion ; and upon him devolved the care of the temple, and the preservation of due respect to the rites of worship. The sheriffdoms were again divided into a number of smaller districts, called Hrepps, consisting of the families which lived contiguous to each other ; and over each of these was appointed a Hrepstiori, or bailiff, who had the immediate inspection of his own bailiwick, and whose office principally consisted in taking care of the poor, and especially in providing against an increase of pauperism. He had likewise his inferior court, at which he was assisted by four of the most respectable members of the community ; in the election of whom particular care was taken that they should be possessed of some property, in order to prevent them from being exposed to bribery or corruption. Such matters as could not be settled at this court were carried before that of the sheriff, where the bailiffs were amenable for any breach of office. In extraordinary cases, there lay an appeal to the provincial court, or an assembly of deputies from the different sheriffdoms, which was held under the presidency of the chief magistrate of that quarter of the island. This court was not held at stated times like the others, but only convened on occasions of great importance and emergency.

Lastly, the Icelanders established a final court of appeal, which they called the *Althing*, or General Assembly of the nation, which was held annually, and lasted for sixteen days. Here, by common consent, the laws of the republic were enacted ; and to this assembly the whole nation looked for the final and equitable adjustment of any differences which might arise among them. To the Supreme Magistrate who presided on these occasions, they gave the name of *Lögsögumadr*, or the Publisher of the Law. He was elected to this office by the free choice of the people, and generally retained it for life. His judgment, confirmed by the people, was in all cases considered as decisive. Though he possessed little or no power out of the assembly, he was always respected by his countrymen as the sovereign judge and the protector of their laws and liberties. He had the power of examining and re-

versing the sentences passed by the inferior magistrates, and even of punishing them if it were proved that they had acted inconsistently with the spirit or dignity of their office.

The existence and constitution of the Icelandic republic exhibit an interesting phenomenon in the history of man. We here behold a number of free and independent settlers, many of whom had been accustomed to rule in their native country, establishing a government on principles of the most perfect liberty, and, with the most consummate skill, enacting laws which were admirably adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the nation. Unintimidated by any foreign power, guided solely by their own natural genius, and uninfluenced by any other principle than the love of liberty, security, and independence, they combined their interests and their energies in support of a political system, at once calculated to protect the rights of individuals, and inspire the community at large with sentiments of exalted patriotism.

This state of liberty the Icelanders maintained for the space of nearly four hundred years. It is true, their tranquillity was ultimately disturbed by a number of intestine feuds and bloody quarrels, against which the laws made no effectual provision ; but these disturbances would never have assumed so serious an aspect, had they not been kindled and encouraged by the kings of Norway, who always regarded Iceland with an envious eye, and employed all the arts of intrigue to bring its inhabitants into subjection to their sceptre. At last Hacon succeeded in effecting their subjugation. In the year 1261, the greater number of the inhabitants became tributary to Norway ; and their example was followed, four years afterwards, by the natives of the eastern shores, who thus joined them in the transfer of themselves and their island to a foreign prince. In this very surrender, however, we observe the spirit of a free people ; and, in fact, the Icelanders may be said to have all along retained their liberty ; for the changes that were introduced in consequence of their junction to Norway, and even those which have resulted from their connection with Denmark since the year 1387, have been exceedingly immaterial ; and no military force has ever set a foot on the island. In becoming subject to Norway,

they expressly stipulated that they should be allowed to retain their ancient laws and privileges ; that they should be exempt from taxes ; and that the king should secure to them the annual importation of the most necessary articles of foreign produce, and preserve peace on the island by an earl appointed for that purpose. And, if these conditions were not fulfilled, they were to be at liberty to withdraw their allegiance from the Norwegian crown.

At present, Iceland is governed by a *Stiftamptman*, who is appointed by his Danish Majesty, and is bound to fill this office for the space of five years. He is likewise special governor of the southern quarter of the island, in which he resides ; and has two *Amtmen*, or deputy-governors, one for the western, and another for the northern and eastern quarters. These quarters are divided into *syssels*, or sheriffdoms.

In 1800 the venerable *Althing* was abrogated, and a supreme court substituted in its room at Reykiavik, consisting of a Chief Justice, two Assessors, and a Secretary. This court meets once a month, and decides on criminal and other cases ; only the Icelanders have the privilege of appealing from its decisions to the high court in Denmark. In ancient times, scarcely any other than pecuniary punishments obtained. But as this mode of punishment was found ineffectual to the prevention of crime, the laws became gradually more severe, and at last capital punishments were introduced. Hanging was the mode inflicted for murder, drowning for child-murder, and burning for witchcraft. At present, fines, imprisonment, and whipping, are the only punishments inflicted in Iceland. Such as are capitally convicted, it is necessary to send over to Copenhagen to be beheaded ; it being a curious fact, that, for some time past, no person could be found on the island who would execute the sentence of the law.

To the Icelanders belongs the honor of being the first discoverers of America and Greenland. The latter country had been seen by one *Gunnbeörn*, who had been driven out to sea in a storm, some time after the colonization of Iceland, but no attempt was made to find it again till the year 982, when *Eirik the Red* proceeded thither on a voyage of discovery. After spending the greater part of three years, exploring the coasts, and taking pos-

session of such places as he deemed most suitable for occupation, he returned to Iceland, and spoke so highly in praise of the newly discovered country, to which he had given the name of Greenland, in order to excite a favorable idea of it in the minds of his countrymen, that he prevailed on a great number of them to accompany him the following summer. Not fewer than twenty-five vessels left Iceland under his convoy, but of these only fourteen reached the place of their destination; the rest were either lost or driven back to Iceland. As the distance between the two countries was little more than two hundred miles, a regular intercourse was established between them; and the number of settlers increased so rapidly, that, soon after the introduction of the Christian religion, about the year 1000, a number of churches were built along the east coast, and a bishop was appointed to superintend the ecclesiastical affairs of the colony. For the space of more than three hundred and fifty years, a regular intercourse was carried on between that country and Denmark, or Norway. In the year 1406, the last bishop was sent over to Greenland. Since then the colony has not been heard of; and its loss is attributed to the wars which took place at that time between the Danes and Swedes, which prevented the trading vessels from putting to sea, and to the accumulation of vast shoals of ice around the coasts, by which they have been rendered totally inaccessible.

The fact that America also was first discovered by the Icelanders, though less generally known, is perfectly well authenticated by the northern historians. Biarni Heriulfsson, on a voyage from Iceland to Greenland, in the year 1001, was driven by a violent easterly gale into the Atlantic; and, after sailing several days, he discovered a fine woody country, in general flat, and only diversified by small heights, which rose into view upon the coast. Not being able to persuade his men to land, he proceeded with a south-west wind for Greenland, which he reached after a voyage of six days. The description which he gave of the country, some time after, excited the curiosity of Leif Eirikson, whose father had first taken possession of Greenland. This adventurer left Norway in a vessel navigated by thirty-five men, and made first a country to the south-

west of Greenland, which, from the description given of its ice-mountains, appears to have been Labrador. Leaving this inauspicious region, they proceeded southwards, till they came to the flat woody country discovered by Biarni; but as they wished to explore the coasts to a greater distance, they again set sail with a north-east wind, and came in two days to an island, separated by a strait from the continent. Having proceeded up this strait, they came to a fine fresh water lake, on the shore of which they built a habitation for their winter residence. The lake abounded with the finest salmon, and the grass retained its verdure, in a great measure, the whole winter. The days were more nearly of an equal length than in Greenland or Iceland, the sun being nine hours above the horizon at the shortest day. One of his men, having discovered that grapes grew there spontaneously, Leif gave to the country the appropriate name of Vinland, or Vine-land, and returned the following spring to Greenland.

The American continent was afterwards visited by Thovald, a brother of Eirik's, who was killed in an engagement with the natives; and a colony of Norwegians was afterwards settled there, and continued to trade with the natives for the period of nearly two centuries, after the country had been discovered.

### *Population, Character, Literature.*

The population of Iceland is supposed to have been much greater in former times than it is at present. Numbers of the inhabitants were carried off by the plague in the year 1402; and in the years 1707 and 1708, not fewer than 16,000 persons were cut off by the small pox. In the year 1801, at which time the last census was taken, the population amounted to 47,207; but is supposed since that time to have received an addition of at least 3,000.

The Icelanders are rather tall, of a frank open countenance, a florid complexion, and yellow flaxen hair. The women are shorter in proportion, and more inclined to corpulency than the men; but many of them would look handsome in a modern European dress. In youth, both sexes are generally of a very weakly habit of body, which is the necessary consequence of their want of proper ex-

ercise, and the poorness of their living ; yet it is surprising what great hardships they are capable of enduring in after life. It is seldom any of them attain to a very advanced age : the females commonly live longer than the men. Owing to the nature of their food, their want of personal cleanliness, and their being often obliged to sit long in wet woollen clothes, they are greatly exposed to cutaneous diseases. They are also frequently attacked with obstinate coughs and pulmonary complaints, by which perhaps more are carried off annually than by any other disease.

Their predominant character is that of unsuspecting frankness, pious contentment, and a steady liveliness of temperament, combined with a strength of intellect and acuteness of mind seldom to be met with in other parts of the world. They have also been noted for the almost unconquerable attachment which they feel to their native island. With all their privations, and exposed, as they are, to numerous dangers from the operation of physical causes, they live under the practical influence of one of their common proverbs : " Iceland is the best land on which the sun shines."

Their language, dress, and mode of life, have been invariably the same during a period of nine centuries ; whilst those of other nations have been subjected to numerous vicissitudes, according to the diversity of external circumstances, and the caprices of certain leading individuals, whose influence has been sufficiently powerful to impart a new tone to the society in which they moved. Habituated from their earliest years to hear of the character of their ancestors, and the asylum which their native island afforded to the sciences when the rest of Europe was immersed in ignorance and barbarism, the Icelanders naturally possess a high degree of national feeling, and there is a certain dignity and boldness of carriage observable in numbers of the peasants, which at once indicates a strong sense of propriety and independence.

The Icelandic is justly regarded as the standard of the grand northern dialect of the Gothic language. The remoteness of the island, and the little intercourse which its inhabitants have maintained with the rest of the world,

have effectually secured the purity and originality of this ancient language ; and it is a curious fact, that while our ablest antiquaries are often puzzled, in endeavoring to decipher certain words and phrases in writings which date their origin only a few centuries back, there is not a peasant, nor indeed scarcely a servant girl in Iceland, who is not capable of reading with ease the most ancient documents extant on the island.

The early and successful application of the Icelanders to the study of the sciences, forms a perfect anomaly in the history of literature. At a period when the darkest gloom was spread over the European horizon, the inhabitants of this comparatively barren island, near the north pole, were cultivating the arts of poetry and history ; and laying up stores of knowledge, which were not merely to supply posterity with data respecting the domestic and political affairs of their native country, but were also destined to furnish very ample and satisfactory information on a great multiplicity of important points connected with the history of other nations. To this a wonderful combination of circumstances proved favorable. The Norwegians, who first went over to Iceland, were sprung from some of the most distinguished families in the land of their nativity. They had been accustomed from their infancy to listen to the traditionary tale of the deeds of other years ; and had frequented the public assemblies, where they saw the value and importance of knowledge. Their mythology and the wonderful scenery of their native land were favorable to the cultivation of poetic genius. The art of writing was for a long time little practised, and in order to transmit to posterity an accurate knowledge of important events, history assumed the garb of poetry. It has generally been agreed among the learned, that the ancient Scandinavians were, and that the Icelanders still are, possessed of a peculiar and underived national poetry. We possess almost innumerable monuments of northern prosody, of both ancient and recent origin, which exhibit all the characteristics of an independent literature, and well merit the attention of such as wish to become acquainted with the diversified productions of the human intellect, or the peculiar features which it assumes under different circumstances.

The fame of the Skalds, or poets of Iceland, was not confined to their native country. They visited the courts of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, where they were received with the highest honors, and richly rewarded for singing the praises of their entertainers.

Icelandic poetry sometimes abounds in extravagant and unnatural metaphor; but it is often no less remarkable for beautiful simplicity. Its harmony depends less upon rhyme, than upon alliteration, and a peculiar arrangement of sounds adapted to the nature of the language.

The most important Icelandic poems are comprised in the *Edda*, which consists of two parts; the former, known by the name of *Sæmund's Edda*, contains a collection of thirty-eight ethic, mythological, and historical poems; and the latter, commonly called *Snorro's Edda*, treats of the art of poetry, and exhibits, by way of illustration, fragments of ancient poetical compositions.

The historical compositions of the Icelanders, known by the name of *Sagas*, are exceedingly numerous, and not less worthy of regard than their poems. Like the latter they originated in the peculiar circumstances of the people at an early period of their history. Aged men, who had treasured up in memory a rich fund of traditional relations, were regarded as under a kind of obligation to repeat them on special occasions, that they might be learned by the young, and thus transmitted to future generations. To these traditions the Icelanders gave the name of *Sagas*. They sometimes blended fiction and truth; but many of them are worthy of the fullest credit.

The most flourishing period of Icelandic literature appears to have been from the beginning of the twelfth, till about the middle of the fourteenth century. During the years immediately preceding the Reformation, the sciences were greatly on the decline; and, had it not been for the blaze of light which that most important event shed over the north of Europe, their cultivation in Iceland might have entirely grown into disuse. A fresh impulse, however, was given by that event to the sleeping energies of Icelandic genius, and a succession of literary characters followed, whose names would do honor to any country, or any age.

The three last centuries have produced many learned men ; and, at the present day, Iceland can boast of sons who have risen to great eminence in the different departments of literature.

On inquiring into the state of mental cultivation in Iceland, it is not so much the literary fame of a few select individuals, who have enjoyed superior advantages, which strikes our attention, as the universal diffusion of the general principles of knowledge among its inhabitants. Though there be only one school in Iceland, and that solitary school is exclusively designed for the education of such as are afterwards to fill offices in church or state ; yet it is exceedingly rare to meet with a boy or girl, who has attained the age of nine or ten years, that cannot read and write with ease. Domestic education is most rigidly attended to ; and it is no uncommon thing, to hear youths repeat passages from the Greek and Latin authors, who have never been farther than a few miles from the place where they were born. Nor do I scarcely ever recollect entering a hut, where I did not find some individual, or another, capable of entering into a conversation with me, on topics which would be reckoned altogether above the understandings of people in the same rank of society in other countries of Europe. On many occasions, indeed, the common Icelanders discover an acquaintance with the history and literature of other nations which is perfectly astonishing.

### *Religion.*

The Norwegians of course carried with them to Iceland the religion of their native country. Thor, in their belief, was the omnipotent thunderer, and supreme disposer of human affairs. With him were associated inferior gods, among whom were Odin, the god of war and victory,—Frega, who presided over the seasons,—Niord, ruler of the winds and seas,—Braga, the god of eloquence and poetry, &c.

In little more than a century, however, an attempt was made to introduce the Christian religion among the inhabitants. Several missionaries were sent from the continent, but their efforts were attended with only very partial success for several years. When at length a few re-

ceived baptism, the heathen were alarmed, a persecution followed, and some of the Christians were obliged to quit the island.

At last, in the year 1000, two of those who had been exiled, Hiallti and Gissur, returned to Iceland, with the full determination of advocating the cause of Christianity in the presence of their countrymen. They arrived at the time of the general assembly, and proceeded instantly thither, where they were welcomed by their friends, who defended them against an attack which was meditated by the pagans. When the assembly broke up, such as had espoused the new faith petitioned that laws should be enacted for securing to them the peaceable profession of their religion.

The heathen now began to institute a solemn appeal to their gods, and resolved to offer, as an expiatory sacrifice, two human victims from each quarter of the island, that the Christian religion might not be permitted to spread over the whole country. On which Hiallti and Gissur convoked an assembly of the Christians, and proposed that an equal number of their party should devote themselves as martyrs to the honor of their Redeemer; and, to stimulate their zeal, Hiallti himself came forward and offered to lay down his life in support of the Christian cause.

The following day, the supreme magistrate convened the assembly for the purpose of bringing the dispute to a termination. He pointed out to them the pernicious consequences which were likely to arise from their having two distinct codes, and advised them to the exercise of mutual toleration under the protection of the same common laws. The effect produced by his speech was so great, that both parties agreed to abide by whatever decision he should give in the case. He therefore enacted, that all the inhabitants of Iceland should be baptized, and worship one God; that such as were still inclined to offer sacrifice should do it privately; but that the ancient regulations should still be in force respecting the exposition of infants,\* and the eating of horse-flesh. The rite

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\* Such as did not choose to bring up their children were at liberty to expose them; and the practice was very common in regard to female infants, especially if there happened to be many young females in a family.

of baptism was now administered to the whole population of the island at the hot baths, which they preferred to immersion in cold water.

In the year 1551, the Reformation was fully introduced into Iceland; and, in the course of a short time, the doctrines of the New Testament became generally known among the inhabitants.

The form and ceremonies of the Icelandic church are strictly Lutheran. The total number of parishes in Iceland amounts to 184. The clergy are all natives of the island, and are maintained partly by cultivating small glebes attached to the churches, and partly from certain tithes raised among the peasants. The provision made for their support is exceedingly scanty. The richest living on the island does not produce 200 rix-dollars; twenty and thirty rix-dollars are the whole of the stipend annexed to many of the parishes; and there are some in which it is even as low as five.

Small as the pittance is which is thus afforded to the Icelandic clergy, and much as their attention must be directed to the management of their farms, they are, nevertheless, in general, very assiduous in the discharge of their public functions, and particularly attentive to the education of the young. Every clergyman in Iceland keeps what is called a register of souls, which contains an accurate statement of the age, situation, conduct, abilities, and proficiency of each individual in his parish. The books in the possession of the family are also entered on the list; and, as this record is made annually, to be presented to the dean at his visitation, a regular view is thus obtained of the moral and religious state of the parish.\*

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\* [We shall be pardoned for adding here, to the statements of Dr. Henderson, the following beautiful sketch. It is by Dr. Holland. EDITOR.]

"The Sabbath scene at an Icelandic church is one of a most singular and interesting kind. The little edifice constructed of wood and turf, is situated, perhaps amid the ruggid ruins of a stream of lava, or beneath mountains covered with unmelted snow. Here the Icelanders assemble to perform the duties of their religion. A group of male and female peasants may be seen gathered about the church, waiting the arrival of their pastor; all habited in their best attire after the manner of the country; their children with them; and the horses which brought them from their respective homes grazing quietly around the little assembly. The arrival of a new comer is welcomed by every one with a kiss of salutation. The pastor makes his appearance among them as a friend; he salutes individually each member of his flock, and stoops down to give his almost parental kiss to the little ones, who are to grow up under his care. These kind offices performed, they all go together into the house of prayer."

In regard to sentiment and style of preaching, the Icelandic clergy may be divided into two classes; those of the old, and such as are of the new school. The former profess to receive the Bible as an authoritative and obligatory revelation of the will of God, and bow with reverence to its decisions. They are men who are dead to the world, and devoted in heart and life to the service of their Redeemer. Their private walk exhibits the genuine tendency of the holy doctrines they teach; and their public discourses are earnest, energetic, animated, pointed, and faithful.

Such of the clergy as are of the new school, the number of whom is happily not very great, treat divine things in quite a different manner. They are entirely men of the world. The awful realities of an approaching eternity have made no suitable impression upon their minds, and levity, callousness, and indifference, mark the whole of their conduct. Nor are the effects resulting from the dissemination of their tenets, on such as imbibe them, less visible and injurious. Their minds become imbued with skepticism and infidelity; every vestige of religion disappears, and immorality of one description or another generally occupies its place.

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# ICELAND,

*&c. &c.*

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## CHAP. I.

Voyage from Copenhagen to Iceland—Ice Mountains—Cape Reykianess—  
Land at Reykiavik—Description of the Town—Visit to the Archdeacon  
at Gardè—Hafnarfjord—Preparations for an Inland Journey—Divine  
Service in the Cathedral.

HAVING brought the printing of the Icelandic Scriptures to a termination, and made the necessary arrangements for my voyage, I embarked at Copenhagen on the 8th of June, 1814. Our progress was so much retarded by unfavorable winds, calms, and other causes, that we did not arrive in sight of Iceland before the 12th of July. On the evening of that day we could discover at the distance of forty miles, some of the Ice Mountains, towering to an immense height in the horizon, surrounded below with clouds, and completely covered with snow. From about the middle of the highest, a black rugged ridge commenced, which continued to dip gradually towards the west, till it was intercepted by two small conical snow-capped mountains, that bore the most perfect resemblance to sugar loaves. When the tediousness of the voyage is taken into consideration, an allowance will easily be made for my attaching the idea of beauty to these masses of perennial snow, notwithstanding the revolting presentiment of cold which necessarily forced itself into my mind. The weather becoming foggy, we lost sight of the land for the two following days; but on

the morning of the 15th, we descried a high land directly ahead, and, on its clearing up about nine o'clock, we were happy to find we had made the south-west extremity of the island, or Cape Reykianess, which it was necessary for us to pass, before we could reach Reykiavik, the place of our destination. On the left we had the Fire islands; so called from their having been thrown up at different periods by the agency of submarine volcanoes. They consist entirely of barren and precipitous rocks, and are almost always covered with sea-fowl. Passing between the innermost of these rocks and the Cape, which is also of volcanic origin, and presents a very bold and rugged appearance, we were rapidly carried by the tide into the Faxè Fiord,\* and, having now got into smooth water, and both wind and current being in our favor, the close of our voyage was the most agreeable that can be imagined.

As we sailed along, I was delighted by the successive opening of the creeks and bays on our right, and by several mountains on the left side of the bay, whose lofty height, the beautiful girdle of silver clouds that surrounded them considerably below the top, the magnificent appearance of the summit above, and the solemn gloom which covered the inferior regions:—all conspired to impress the mind with reverential and admiring ideas of that Power who laid the foundations of the earth, and at whose wrath the mountains tremble and shake. At a little past ten we anchored before the town of Reykiavik. The first act of kindness shown us by the natives, was their mounting us on their shoulders, and carrying us ashore from the boat. On landing, we were met by a crowd of men, women, and children, who filled the air with the exclamations, “ Peace! come in peace! the Lord bless you!” &c. salutations that were at once calculated to prepossess a stranger in favor of the religious disposition of the Icelanders. At the head of the beach we were met by the superior class of the inhabitants, by whom we were welcomed to the island.

The day after my arrival was principally occupied in getting my luggage ashore from the vessel, and paying my

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\* *Fiord* signifies a bay or frith.

respects to the Right Rev. the Bishop of Iceland, His Excellency the Governor, the Landsfoged, and others, who, in the warmest terms, expressed their approbation of the object I had in view, in visiting the island. The bishop, in particular, testified his conviction of the great good that would result from the present instance of foreign benevolence; confirmed the accounts that had already been received by the Bible Society, respecting the extreme want of the Scriptures on the island; declared how sensible he was of the obligations under which his countrymen lay to their spiritual benefactors; and kindly promised to render me every assistance in his power, towards facilitating the attainment of my object.

Reykiavik, which, about fifty years ago, consisted merely of a few houses, has lately risen into some notice, having become the residence of the governor, the Episcopal see, the seat of the Supreme Court of Judicature, and the principal mercantile station on the island. It consists of two streets, the longer of which, built only on the one side, stretches along the shore, and is entirely occupied by the merchants: the other, which strikes off at the west end of the town, and runs almost in a direct line back to the margin of a small lake, contains the houses of the Bishop, Landsfoged, and others not immediately engaged in trade. At the east end of the town, behind the range of houses along the beach, and in a parallel line with them, are the houses of the Governor, and Sysselman; and a little behind these, to the south-west, is the church, which stands by itself, on a gentle rise of the green, occupying the space between the town and the lake. It is a heavy building of stone, and might make a commodious place of worship, were it not that the roof, which is covered with red tiles, is sadly out of repair, and it is not without danger that the congregation assemble in it in stormy weather. On the rising ground at the end of the governor's house, from which it is separated by a small rivulet, lies the house of correction, a large white-washed stone building, which, at a distance, has the most respectable appearance of any about the place. The dwelling-houses, with two exceptions, are all constructed of wood, and have generally a storehouse or two, and a small garden attached to them. On the height to the west is the observatory, a small building of wood; and on the sum-

mit of the opposite eminence stands the school monument, which the students have raised with much pains from the calcined stones in the vicinity. At a short distance in the bay, are several small islands, the principal of which is Videy, which, on account of its agreeable situation, the richness of its pasture, and the number of eider-ducks that annually frequent it, is reckoned superior to any other spot in the southern parts of the island.

On the 17th I rode, in company with a friend, to Gardè, the residence of the very Rev. Marcus Magnusson, the archdeacon of Iceland, and dean of Guldbringè and Kiosar Syssels. In our way we fell in with the first effects I had seen of subterraneous fire—a tract of lava, rugged and wild, which, at first sight, threatened to put a stop to our journey. To whatever side we turned, nothing presented itself to our view but the dismal ruins of mountains, which have been so completely convulsed by the reciprocal contention of the elements beneath, that, after having emitted immense quantities of lava, their foundations have given way, and the whole structure has fallen in, and continued to burn till the more fusible parts were entirely calcined. Large masses of rock, which one would scarcely suppose had been affected by fire, lie intermingled with the lava, which has burned with the most dreadful violence. These ruins are scattered in every direction, and assume the most forbidding and gloomy aspect. Having gained the summit of the hill to the west of the lava, a more agreeable prospect presented itself. Gardè, from which this lava takes the name of Gardèhraun,\* lay directly before us; and, a little to the right, the church and school of Bessastad, and a number of beautiful cottages. Besides the church, a pretty large building of wood, Gardè consists of several small houses, most of which are occupied by the archdeacon. On our arrival, he met us at the door, and gave us a welcome reception. I was happy to be informed, that the copies of the New Testament that had been sent him in 1812, had soon been disposed of, and that the desire of obtaining them was at last so keen, that the peasants would have paid double the price, if it had only been in their power to obtain them. He produced a specimen of the

\* *Hraun*, pronounced *Hroyn*, is the Icelandic for lava, and properly signifies a rough and rugged tract formed by melting or precipitation.

high estimation in which the Divine oracles are held by the Icelanders, and the assiduity with which they apply to the study of them. It was a copy of the Bible in folio, a great part of which had been devoured by the tooth of time; but the defective pages had all been replaced, and the text supplied in the most accurate manner. The hand-writing was such as would do honor to any writing-master in Europe. On my putting the question, whether it had not been written by a clergyman, or some other person in a public capacity, I was told, to my no small surprise, that it had been done by a common peasant, and that such instances of elegant penmanship are by no means uncommon in Iceland.

Having received, from the archdeacon, repeated assurances of assistance in the prosecution of my object, we left Gardè, and rode over a rough stream of lava to Hafnarfjord, which is situated on the north side of the bay of the same name, and near its termination. Just before coming to the harbor, as we were scrambling over the sharp crusts of the broken bubbles of lava, some of which were upwards of fifteen feet in height, I received peculiar gratification from the sight of a small hamlet neatly built of lava, and a garden in full verdure, which lay in the heart of one of these. This spot is completely sheltered from wintry blasts by the lofty walls formed by the surrounding crust, and has a fine southern exposure. The scenery was strikingly grotesque; and the contrast between the verdure and regularity observable in the garden, and the blackness and distorted forms of the lava, was inimitably grand. Hafnarfjord consists only of two mercantile houses, with their store-houses, and a few cottages inhabited by the working people. It is, however, remarkable, on account of its dry dock, which is the only thing of the kind on the island. On our return, the way led us through a tract of the lava still more horrific than that described above. The road, which in most places did not exceed the breadth of an ordinary foot-path, was so filled with sharp-pointed pieces of lava, that our poor horses could only proceed by cautiously stepping over one stone after another; and every now and then we were annoyed by large masses jutting out from the sides, which threatened to lacerate our feet, or, if we

were off our guard, to precipitate us from our horses. Besides melted masses, resembling those on the other side of the tract, we encountered large and dangerous chasms, between which, at times, there was scarcely sufficient space left for our horses to pass. The gloom of night added to the horrors of the scene, and it was not without the most powerful apprehension of danger that we reached the opposite side of the tract.

On my arrival in Iceland, it was with deep regret I learned, that the most favorable opportunity for the distribution of the Bibles and New Testaments this season was lost. Had I come a month sooner, I should have arrived in the very middle of the period of traffic, when several hundreds of the inhabitants repair to this place from all quarters of the island, and barter their home productions for foreign commodities, and articles of necessary use for the winter. They had now all returned to their respective abodes, and there was no other way of acquainting them with the supply that had arrived, except by sending an express to the different corners, or travelling myself around the coast. The latter mode I preferred, on various accounts, as I should thereby have it in my power to ascertain the actual wants of the people in a spiritual point of view; leave copies as specimens on passing along; visit the different sea-ports, to which copies of the Scriptures had been forwarded from Copenhagen, and make the necessary arrangements with the merchants and others for their circulation in the vicinity; and especially, as there was reason to hope, that, by the blessing of God on my conversation with such of the clergy as should fall in my way, I might be the humble instrument of stirring them up to greater diligence and zeal in the work of the Lord, by informing them of the present appearances with respect to religion abroad, the lively interest which Christians of all denominations take in its diffusion, and the energetic and successful means employed by them for that purpose. Their entire exclusion, by invincible local circumstances, from almost all access to the sources of religious intelligence, has a necessary tendency to engender a partial coldness and indifference about the common interests of the gospel, and to render this part of the vineyard of Christ which they occupy,

frigid and barren as the island they inhabit. A visit from a stranger, especially one who travelled among them with the end I had in view, would, it was presumed, excite a more lively concern about the Holy Scriptures, and thus contribute to advance the cause of pure and undefiled religion.

My journey being therefore determined on, it now became a question, whether I ought to proceed directly across the desert and uninhabited tract in the interior, to the northern parts of the island, and then pursue my route along the coast, back to this place ; or visit the coast first, and then return across the mountains. I was induced to adopt the former, chiefly from the consideration, that Captain Von Scheel, one of the Danish officers employed in surveying the coasts, was to proceed in that direction in the course of a few days, and that I would derive much valuable information and advice from him relative to a variety of subjects with which I was necessarily unacquainted.

Travelling in Iceland is attended with much more trouble and difficulty than in any other part of Europe. Here there is neither coach nor curriicle, cart nor waggon, for the conveyance of one's person and baggage. Every thing is carried on horseback. The first thing, therefore, that a traveller has to think of, is the procuring of horses, which he may either hire or purchase ; but the latter mode is preferable, as in that case he has them more at his command ; and it is also attended with less expense, especially if the journey be of any length. The common horses are in general from thirteen to fourteen hands high, strongly made, lively, persevering, and carry from 225 to 300 pounds weight, the distance of 25 miles a day. In breaking such as they design for the saddle, the natives make it their grand object to inure them to a short, easy amble, at which many of them advance with almost incredible swiftness. As there are no inns on the island, the traveller must also provide himself with a tent, which is the more necessary on account of the deserts he has sometimes to traverse, and even at the farms he will prefer it to the best accommodations that may be offered him. A good experienced guide is the next requisite, and, if the cavalcade be large, a servant to take care of the horses and baggage is equally necessary. Travelling

chests must also be procured, together with provisions, and small money, with which to reward any trivial services that may be shown by the peasants. For those who penetrate into the interior, a compass is indispensable, as they are apt to get bewildered in snowy or foggy weather; and if they do not keep in the proper direction, may easily wander into deserts, where both themselves and their horses must perish with hunger.

On the 24th, which was the Lord's day, I attended worship in the Cathedral. The service was begun by the Archdeacon, who had come to town on purpose to place a new minister. After finishing the liturgical service at the altar, he ascended the pulpit and pronounced a short prayer, and then read the gospel for the day, on which he also founded his discourse, which was strictly evangelical. Towards the close, he gave a summary view of the means by which the gospel has been propagated, from the time it began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus and his Apostles, down to the present day; and, by a noble prosopopoeia, reminded Iceland of the rich share she had enjoyed of this blessing, and the responsibility she lay under for the use of her mercies. In particular, he called the attention of the inhabitants of Reykiavik to the privileges which had been bestowed upon them in this respect; but added, that it was a lamentable but notorious fact, that their degeneracy seemed to keep pace with the excellence of the ministers that were sent to labor among them. He then proceeded to place the minister, which he did by simply stating his presentation by the King of Denmark, and exhorting both him and the congregation to the discharge of the duties they mutually owed each other. After sermon, the Rev. Arne Helgason, who had been presented to the living, went to the altar, and three females stepped forward and knelt, in order to receive the sacrament. The celebration of this rite commenced by the clergyman's chanting the Lord's prayer, and the words of the institution; after which, the choristers sung a sacramental hymn, and the communicants were served at the same time with the elements. Several short prayers were then repeated, to which responses were given by the choristers; and the service concluded with the singing of a psalm, and the enunciation of the levitical benediction.

## CHAP. II.

Leave Reykiavik for the North—Mode of Travelling—Mode of Salutation in Iceland—Hospitality—Description of Icelandie Tents—Thingvalla Church—Seat of the Ancient Court of Justicee—Tract of Lava—Hot Springs of Laugarvalla—The Geysers—Remarkable instance of Intelligence in a Girl—Desert—Valley of Eyafjord—Group of Icelanders reading the New Testament—Factory of Akureyri—Want of Bibles, and anxiety to obtain them—Visit to the Sheriff at Kiarne—Female Library—Domestic Worship.

AT an early hour on the morning of the 26th of July, I began to pack up my baggage, and make the final preparations for my departure to the North. The horses being caught, my servant proceeded to load them, which was accomplished in the following manner. Large square pieces of a thin fibrous turf were laid on the horses' backs, above which was placed a kind of wooden saddle, that served the double purpose of keeping the turf together, and supporting the baggage, which was suspended on two wooden pegs, fixed one on each side of the saddle. The whole was fastened by means of two leathern thongs that went round the belly of the horse. I was soon reconciled to the mode of travelling, on discovering that it was quite oriental, and almost fancied myself in the midst of an Arabian caravan. In fact, there exist so many coincidences between the natural appearances of this island, together with the manners and customs of its inhabitants, and what is to be met with in the East, that I must claim some indulgence from the reader, if I should occasionally allude to them, especially as they tend to throw light on many passages of Scripture. Our horses formed a pretty large cavalcade, amounting to not less than eighteen in number. The first was led by one of the servants; and the rest were tied to each other in a line, by means of a cord of hair fastened to the tail of the one that went before, and

tied round the under jaw of the one that followed. Sometimes the horses are suffered to go loose, in which case they are driven before the travellers ; and, should any of them stray from the path, a certain call from the guide is sufficient to bring them back.

The first part of the road was by no means calculated to inspire us with very favorable ideas of the country ; for little else appeared around us but vast fields of stones and comminuted lava. About six in the evening we arrived at Mossfell, which stands on an eminence, and commands an extensive, though rather barren prospect. The church is built of wood, has a coat of turf around the sides, and the roof consists of the same material. It has only two small windows at the east end, and a sky-light to the south ; and the whole structure does not exceed thirteen feet in length, by nine in breadth. We did not find the clergyman at home ; but his wife treated us with plenty of fresh cream, and we were quite delighted with the frankness and agility with which she performed the rites of hospitality.

Leaving Mossfell, we entered a dreary moor, which, from west to east, the direction in which we travelled, was certainly not less than eighteen miles. At midnight we reached the western margin of the Thingvalla Lake, and stopped at a small cottage called Skálabrecka. All, of course, was shut ; but we followed Captain Von Scheel, who scaled the walls, and each of us endeavored to find some window or hole in the roof, through which we might rouse some of the inhabitants. It was not, however, till the Captain had forced open one of the doors, and called as loud as he was able, that we effected our purpose. The salutation he made use of was, *Her se Gud*, “ May God be in this place ! ” which, after he had repeated it near a dozen of times, was answered with *Drottinn blessa thik*, “ The Lord bless thee.” My imagination led me instantly to the field of Boaz, Ruth ii. 4 ; and I felt all the force of our Saviour’s injunction : “ When ye enter the house, salute it ; and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it,” Matt. x. 12, 13. The common salutations of the Icelanders are most palpably oriental. On meeting a person, you hail him with, *Sæl vertu*, which exactly corresponds to the Hebrew *Shalom lach* ; or the Arabic *Salam aleik* : neither of which signify “ peace,” in the occi-

dental sense of the word, but “I wish thee happiness, or prosperity.” It would appear, from the Edda, that the ancient Scandinavians used *Heill* instead of *Sell*, whence, through the medium of the Anglo-Saxon, our English “hail,” which occurs as a salutation in many parts of the Bible. The person you salute generally replies, *Drottinn blessa ydr*, or *Blessa ydr Drottinn*, “The Lord bless you.” When you meet the head of a family, you wish prosperity to him, and all that are in his house, (See 1 Sam. xxv. 6.); and, on leaving them, you say, *Se i Guds Fridi*, “May you remain in the peace of God;” which is returned with, *Guds Fridi veri med ydr*, “The peace of God be with you.” Both at meeting and parting, an affectionate kiss on the mouth, without distinction of rank, age, or sex, is the only mode of salutation known in Iceland, except sometimes in the immediate vicinity of the factories, where the common Icelander salutes a foreigner whom he regards as his superior, by placing his right hand on his mouth or left breast, and then making a deep bow. When you visit a family in Iceland, you must salute them according to their age and rank, beginning with the highest, and descending, according to your best judgment, to the lowest, not even excepting the servants: but, on taking leave, this order is completely reversed; the salutation is first tendered to the servants, then to the children, and, last of all, to the mistress and master of the family.

The remoteness of the sleeping apartment, which lay at the inner end of a long narrow passage, could not but render it difficult for the people to hear us; however, they soon began to make their appearance; and, instead of looking sulky, or grumbling at us for having disturbed them in their soundest repose, they manifested the utmost willingness to serve us; and assisted us in unloading the horses, and loosing our tents, which we pitched close to the lake. The Icelandic tents pretty much resemble those of the Bedoween Arabs, and are erected in the following manner: Two poles, of from five to six feet in length, are stuck fast in the ground, at the distance of seven or eight feet, and joined together at the top by a third pole, over which the curtain, consisting of white wadmel, or coarse woollen cloth, is spread, and braced tight by means of cords fastened to the eaves, and tied at the other end.

to hooked wooden pins, which are driven into the ground at different distances round the tent. The flaps are provided with small holes around the border, and are fastened close to the ground in the same manner, except at the one end, where a small piece is left loose to serve the purpose of a door. In these tents the natives live several weeks on the mountains every summer, while they are collecting the *lichen Islandicus*, and are extremely fond of this kind of Nomadic life.

Our friend, Captain Von Scheel, lay on an excellent bed, supported by two long wooden poles, fixed at each end to the top of his travelling chests, about a foot and a half above the ground ; and this commodious method I also adopted on my arrival in the North : but at present I was obliged to spread my couch on the ground, from which I was separated only by the flat pieces of turf that had served as pack-saddles ; and my riding-saddle, placed on its back, formed an admirable pillow. To prevent the horses from running away, their fore feet were tied together with a rope of hair, in the one end of which was an eye, and the other was wound round the ankle-bone of a sheep, and thus fixed in the noose. As the morning was rather cold, we got a supply of warm milk, which proved very refreshing ; and a little before two o'clock, I sat down on one of the wooden boxes, at the door of my tent, and read the 103d Psalm, in my small pocket Bible—so clear are the summer nights in this northern latitude.

The inhabitants of the cottage seemed very poor ; and though they were in possession of a few books, had no part of the Scriptures. I therefore presented the peasant with a Bible, which he received with every demonstration of gratitude and joy.

After bathing in the lake, we set off for Thingvalla. The track we followed led us all at once to the brink of the frightful chasm, called Almannagiâ, where the solid masses of burnt rock have been disrupted, so as to form a fissure, or gap, not less than 180 feet deep ; in many places nearly of the same width ; and about three miles in length. At first sight, the stupendous precipices inspired us with a certain degree of terror, which, however, soon left us, and we spent nearly half an hour in surveying the deep chasms, running nearly parallel with the main one, almost

below our feet. On the west side of the rent, at no great distance from its southern termination, it is met by another opening, partially filled with large masses of broken rock, down which the traveller must resolve to proceed. Binding up the bridles of our horses, we made them descend before us, while we contemplated with surprise the undaunted nimbleness with which they leaped from one step of this natural staircase to another. When we arrived at the bottom, we found ourselves situated in the midst of a fine green; and, after stopping once more to admire the wild and rugged grandeur of the scenery, we again mounted our steeds, and, reaching a pass in the eastern cliffs, which, owing to the sinking of the ground, are considerably lower, we made our egress with the utmost ease.

We now entered the Thingvalla, or Court Valley; and, crossing the river Oxerâ, by which it is divided, came about one o'clock to Thingvalla church, where we were kindly received, and resolved to await our baggage, which had proceeded by a more circuitous route. The pastor is an aged man of sixty-nine. His parish consists of twelve families; and though he could not give me any certain statement, yet he did not believe that there were more than two, or, at most, three of them that were in possession of a copy of the Bible. He promised to inform his parishioners of the supply that had come to the island. The church is very small, not much larger than that of Mossfell, and is filled with barrels, books, and chests, which serve the purpose of seats, and, on a shelf before the altar, is a coffin, which the clergyman has prepared for himself; and which, in all likelihood, he must soon occupy.

What renders Thingvalla the most remarkable, perhaps, of any spot to which importance is attached in the annals of Iceland, is its having been the seat of the Althing, or general assembly of the nation, for the period of nearly nine hundred years. The ecclesiastical court was also convened here annually, and it was here that the Christian religion was publicly acknowledged in the year 1000.

Previous to the year 1690, the court was held in the open air, surrounded by a scenery, the wildest and most horrific of any in nature, and awfully calculated to add to the terrors of justice, and maintain the inviolability of the civil code. "It is," says Sir George Mackenzie, "a spot

of singular wildness and desolation ; on every side of which, appear the most tremendous effects of ancient convulsion and disorder ; while nature now sleeps in a death-like silence amid the horrors she has formed." As the aged clergyman was unable to walk about with us himself, he begged we would allow his son to show us the wonders of the place. We accordingly followed him a little to the north-west of the church, when we entered on a long and narrow tract of solid lava, covered with the richest vegetation, but completely separated from the rocks on both sides, by two parallel fissures, which, in most places, are upwards of forty fathoms in depth, and in some places no bottom can be found at all. They are filled with the most beautiful pellucid water, till within about sixty feet of the brink on which we stood. It was impossible for us to look down into the dreadful abyss on either side, without being sensible of the most disagreeable emotions ; and when, with the terrors of our situation, we combined the idea of the awful period when the rocks rent and the mountains fell, we felt a desire to remove as quickly as possible to a safer and more agreeable scene. The place is called "the Law Mount ;" and the ruins of the house occupied by the chief magistrate are still to be seen. A little below this, near the side of the river, we were shown the spot, where, in ancient times, many a miserable wight was burned for witchcraft. On removing a little of the earth, we discovered the remains of burnt bones and ashes.

After dining on an excellent dish of fresh salmon trout, a species of fish in which the lake abounds, and equally good curds and cream, we left Thingvalla, and pursued our journey round the north end of the lake. The whole of the tract consisted of lava, and, at almost every turn of the narrow path, we fell in with chasms and apertures, which wore the most perilous aspect. We had to pass a natural bridge, consisting of a thin crust of lava, little more than two feet in breadth ; yet, as the Icelandic horses are uncommonly sure-footed, and generally accustomed to traverse such rugged tracts, we preferred riding to walking, and, in the good providence of God, arrived in safety on the opposite side. We now entertained the hope of entering a more auspicious region ; but after crossing a dismal stream of lava, the surface of which was covered

with grey moss, and in many places exhibited large caves, we were suddenly arrested by sharp vitrified masses of broken lava, which appears to have proceeded from a volcano close to us on the left, and on its reaching this spot to have cooled and contracted, and thus the numerous crevices have been formed which presented themselves every where around us. Proceeding, with wary step, we ultimately succeeded in getting across this rough and difficult tract; and descending by the south side of a large mountain, whose surface discovered but scanty traces of vegetation, we entered a fine valley, the grass of which, though coarse, was nearly two feet in length. The numerous peaked mountains to the left, and the yellowish volcanic cones at their base, exhibited one of the most romantic prospects we had yet beheld. We next crossed a barren moor, and, after winding round the foot of some lofty mountains, reached the farm of Laugarvalla, situated close to the lake of the same name, about half past eight in the evening.

Having pitched our tents on a beautiful green at some distance from the houses, we went, before retiring to sleep, to visit the hot springs on the margin of the lake. From most of them, the water is thrown up at irregular intervals, yet not to any great height; three feet being the highest we observed. They erupt, however, with great impetuosity, and a considerable quantity of steam makes its escape. In the hottest we tried, Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at  $212^{\circ}$ . They appear to be of a strong sulphureous quality, and the incrustations formed by their depositions are extremely delicate and beautiful.

The prospect we had on the morning of the 28th, far transcended what we had enjoyed the preceding day in the vicinity of Thingvalla. We had the Laugarvalla Lake direct before us, and, a little to the south, another larger lake connected with it, and known by the name of Apavatn. The large volumes of steam which rose from the spouting springs close to the farm; those which made their escape from the numerous caldrons at the south side of the lake; and especially the column, eclipsing all the rest, which was emitted from a large spring, at the distance of seven miles to the north-east, had the grandest effect; and, viewed in conjunction with the widely extended plain,

intersected in various parts by beautiful serpentine rivers, the long range of mountains to the eastward, over which Mount Heckla reared her three snow-clad summits ; presented altogether a landscape which only wanted wood to render it the most completely picturesque of any in the world. The clearness, too, and serenity of the atmosphere, made every object appear to double advantage.

The sun shone with dazzling splendor, and the heat was so intense, that it was with some degree of reluctance we left the shade of our tents in order to prosecute our journey. What proved most annoying, was an immense quantity of large mosquitoes, by which our horses were sadly tormented ; and, though we tied handkerchiefs over our faces, it was scarcely possible to prevent them from biting us.

At about four in the afternoon we arrived at the hot springs, called the Geysers. At the distance of several miles, on turning round the foot of a high mountain on our left, we could descry, from the clouds of vapor that were rising and convolving in the atmosphere, the spot where one of the most magnificent and unparalleled scenes in nature is displayed :—where, bursting the parted ground, Great Geyser

“ —— hot, through scorching cliffs, is seen to rise,  
With exhalations steaming to the skies !”

Electrified, as it were, by the sight, and feeling impatient to have our curiosity fully gratified, Mr. Hodgson and I rode on before the cavalcade ; and, just as we got clear of the south-east corner of the low hill, at the side of which the springs are situated, we were saluted by an eruption which lasted several minutes, and during which the water appeared to be carried to a great height in the air. Riding on between the springs and the hill, we fell in with a small green spot, where we left our horses, and proceeded, as if by an irresistible impulse, to the gently sloping ground, from the surface of which numerous columns of steam were making their escape.

Though surrounded by a great multiplicity of boiling springs, and steaming apertures, the magnitude and grandeur of which far exceeded any thing we had ever seen before, we felt at no loss in determining on which of them

to feast our wondering eyes, and bestow the primary moments of astonished contemplation. Near the northern extremity of the tract rose a large circular mound, formed by the depositions of the fountain, justly distinguished by the appellation of the Great Geyser, from the middle of which a great degree of evaporation was visible. Ascending the rampart, we had the spacious basin at our feet more than half filled with the most beautiful hot crystalline water, which was but just moved by a gentle ebullition, occasioned by the escape of steam from a cylindrical pipe or funnel in the centre. This pipe I ascertained by ad-measurement to be seventy-eight feet of perpendicular depth ; its diameter is in general from eight to ten feet, but near the mouth it gradually widens, and opens almost imperceptibly into the basin, the inside of which exhibits a whitish surface, consisting of a siliceous incrustation, which has been rendered almost perfectly smooth by the incessant action of the boiling water. The diameter of the basin is fifty-six feet in one direction, and forty-six in another ; and, when full, it measures about four feet in depth from the surface of the water to the commencement of the pipe. The borders of the basin, which form the highest part of the mound, are very irregular, owing to the various accretions of the deposited substances ; and at two places are small channels, equally polished with the interior of the basin, through which the water makes its escape, when it has been filled to the margin. The declivity of the mound is rapid at first, especially on the north-west side, but instantly begins to slope more gradually, and the depositions are spread all around to different distances, the least of which is near an hundred feet. The whole of this surface, the two small channels excepted, displays a beautiful siliceous efflorescence, rising in small granular clusters, which bear the most striking resemblance to the heads of cauliflowers, and, while wet, are of so extremely delicate a texture, that it is hardly possible to remove them in a perfect state. They are of a brownish color, but in some places approaching to a yellow. On leaving the mound, the hot water passes through a turfy kind of soil, and, by acting on the peat, mosses, and grass, converts them entirely into stone, and furnishes the curious traveller with some of the finest specimens of petrifaction.

Having stood some time in silent admiration of the magnificent spectacle which this matchless fountain, even in a state of inactivity, presents to the view, as there were no indications of an immediate eruption, we returned to the spot where we had left our horses ; and, as it formed a small eminence at the base of the hill, and commanded a view of the whole tract, we fixed on it as the site of our tents. About thirty-eight minutes past five, we were apprized, by low reports, and a slight concussion of the ground, that an eruption was about to take place ; but only a few small jets were thrown up, and the water in the basin did not rise above the surface of the outlets. Not being willing to miss the very first symptoms of the phenomenon, we kept walking about in the vicinity of the spring, now surveying some of the other cavities, and now collecting elegant specimens of petrified wood, leaves, &c. on the rising ground between the Geyser and the base of the hill. At fifteen minutes past eight we counted five or six reports, that shook the mound on which we stood, but no remarkable jet followed : the water only boiled with great violence, and, by its heavings, caused a number of small waves to flow towards the margin of the basin, which, at the same time, received an addition to its contents. Twenty-five minutes past nine, as I returned from the neighboring hill, I heard reports which were both louder and more numerous than any of the preceding, and exactly resembled the distant discharge of a park of artillery. Concluding from these circumstances that the long expected wonders were about to commence, I ran to the mound, which shook violently under my feet, and I had scarcely time to look into the basin, when the fountain exploded, and instantly compelled me to retire to a respectful distance on the windward side. The water rushed up out of the pipe with amazing velocity, and was projected by irregular jets into the atmosphere, surrounded by immense volumes of steam, which, in a great measure, hid the column from the view. The first four or five jets were inconsiderable, not exceeding fifteen or twenty feet in height ; these were followed by one about fifty feet, which was succeeded by two or three considerably lower ; after which came the last, exceeding all the rest in splendor, which rose at least to the height of seventy feet.

The large stones which we had previously thrown into the pipe were ejaculated to a great height, especially one, which was thrown much higher than the water. On the propulsion of the jets, they lifted up the water in the basin nearest the orifice of the pipe to the height of a foot, or a foot and a half, and, on the falling of the column, it not only caused the basin to overflow at the usual channels, but forced the water over the highest part of the brim, behind which I was standing. The great body of the column (at least ten feet in diameter,) rose perpendicularly, but was divided into a number of the most superb curvated ramifications ; and several smaller sproutings were severed from it, and projected in oblique directions, to the no small danger of the spectator, who is apt to get scalded, ere he is aware, by the falling jet.

On the cessation of the eruption, the water instantly sunk into the pipe, but rose again immediately, to about half a foot above the orifice, where it remained stationary. All being again in a state of tranquillity, and the clouds of steam having left the basin, I entered it, and proceeded within reach of the water, which I found to be 183° of Fahrenheit, a temperature of more than twenty degrees less than at any period while the basin was filling, and occasioned, I suppose, by the cooling of the water during its projection into the air.

The whole scene was indescribably astonishing ; but what interested us most, was the circumstance, that the strongest jet came last, as if the Geyser had summoned all her powers in order to show us the greatness of her energy, and make a grand finish before retiring into the subterraneous chambers in which she is concealed from mortal view. Our curiosity had been gratified, but it was far from being satisfied. We now wished to have it in our power to inspect the mechanism of this mighty engine, and obtain a view of the springs by which it is put in motion : but the wish was vain ; for they lie in “a tract which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen ;”—which man, with all his boasted powers, cannot, and dare not approach. While the jets were rushing up towards heaven, with the velocity of an arrow, my mind was forcibly borne along with them, to the contemplation of the Great and Omnipotent JEHOVAH, in comparison with whom,

these, and all the wonders scattered over the whole immensity of existence, dwindle into absolute insignificance ; whose almighty command spake the universe into being ; and at whose sovereign fiat the whole fabric might be reduced, in an instant, to its original nothing. Such scenes exhibit only “the hiding of His power.” It is merely the surface of His works that is visible. Their internal structure He hath involved in obscurity ; and the sagest of the sons of man is incapable of tracing them from their origin to their consummation. After the closest and most unwearyed application, the utmost we can boast of is, that we have heard a whisper of His proceedings, and investigated the extremities of His operations.\*

On the morning of the 29th I was awakened by Captain Von Scheel, at twenty-three minutes past five o’clock, to contemplate an eruption of the spring, which Sir John Stanley† denominates the New Geyser, situated at the distance of an hundred and forty yards to the south of the principal fountain. It is scarcely possible, however, to give any idea of the brilliancy and grandeur of the scene which caught my eye on drawing aside the curtain of my tent. From an orifice, nine feet in diameter, which lay directly before me, at the distance of about an hundred yards, a column of water, accompanied with prodigious volumes of steam, was erupted with inconceivable force, and a tremendously roaring noise, to varied heights, of from fifty to eighty feet, and threatened to darken the horizon, though brightly illumined by the morning sun. During the first quarter of an hour, I found it impossible to move from my knees, on which I had raised myself, but poured out my soul in solemn adoration of the Almighty Author of nature, to whose control all her secret movements and terrifying operations are subject :—“ who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ; who toucheth the hills, and they smoke.”‡ At length I repaired to the fountain, where we all met, and communicated to each other our mutual and enraptured feelings of wonder and admiration. The jets of water now subsided ; but their place was occupied by the spray and steam, which, having

\* Eccles. iii. 10. and Job xxvi. 14. in the Heb.

† Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland, p. 23.

‡ Psalm civ. 32.

free room to play, rushed with a deafening roar, to a height little inferior to that of the water. On throwing the largest stones we could find into the pipe, they were instantly propelled to an amazing height; and some of them that were cast up more perpendicularly than the others, remained for the space of four or five minutes within the influence of the steam, being successively ejected, and falling again in a very amusing manner. A gentle northern breeze carried part of the spray at the top of the pillar to the one side, when it fell like a drizzling rain, and was so cold that we could stand below it, and receive it on our hands or face without the least inconvenience. While I kept my station on the same side with the sun, a most brilliant circular bow, of a large size, appeared on the opposite side of the fountain; and, on changing sides, having the fountain between me and the sun, I discovered another, if possible still more beautiful, but so small as only to encircle my head. Their hues entirely resembled those of the common rainbow. After continuing to roar about half an hour longer, the column of spray visibly diminished, and sunk gradually, till twenty-six minutes past six, when it fell to the same state in which we had observed it the preceding day, the water boiling at the depth of about twenty feet below the orifice of the shaft.

The external structure of this fountain is very different from that of the Great Geyser. The crater, or pipe, which is about nine feet in diameter, and forty-four in depth, is not entirely circular; neither does it descend so perpendicularly as that of the other. At the orifice it becomes still more irregular, and, instead of opening into a basin, it is defended on the one side by an incrusted wall, about a foot and a half in height, while on the other it is level with the surface of the ground.

The name given to this fountain by the natives is *Strockr*, which is derived from the verb *strocka*, "to agitate, or bring into motion," and properly denotes *a churn*. "Before the month of June, 1789, the year I visited Iceland," says Sir John Stanley, "this spring had not played with any great degree of violence, at least for a considerable time. (Indeed, the formation of the pipe will not allow us to suppose, that its eruptions had, at no

former period, been violent.) But, in the month of June, this quarter of Iceland had suffered some very severe shocks of an earthquake ; and it is not unlikely, that many of the cavities communicating with the bottom of the pipe had been then enlarged, and new sources of water opened into them."\* This conjecture is rendered certain by the fact, that during the dreadful earthquake which happened in the year 1784, not only did the three more remarkable fountains gush forth with uncommon violence, but no less than thirty-five spouting springs made their appearance, many of which, however, afterwards abated in their fury.†

During the night there had been two large explosions of the Great Geyser, but the servant who observed them not awaking us, we were deprived of the sight.

At ten minutes before ten, we were attracted to the mound by several loud reports, which were succeeded by a partial eruption ; none of the jets exceeding five feet in height. About half past ten the reports were reiterated, but no jets ensued ; only a gentle rise was observable in the contents of the basin. At eleven we were again gratified with a most brilliant eruption. The jets were ten or twelve in number, and the water was carried to the height of at least sixty feet. Vast clouds of steam, which made their escape during the eruption, continued to roll and spread as they ascended, till they filled the whole of the horizon around us ; and the sun, though shining in full splendor, was completely eclipsed ; but the points of the jets, receiving his rays as they rose through the vapor, wore the most charming lustre, being white and glistening as snow. The instant all was over, Mr. Hodgson and I repaired to the foot of a small cataract, at the northern base of the mound, over which the streamlet is precipitated in its way down to the river, and had a pleasant bath in the warm water as it fell upon us from the rock above.

A small preliminary eruption again took place at seventeen minutes past one, and another four minutes before two. The basin continued filling, till within three minutes of three, when, after a number of very loud

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\* Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland, p. 41.

† Bishop Finnson, in The Transactions of the Icelandic Society.

reports, the water burst, and the spouts rose with a noise and velocity which I can compare to nothing more aptly than to those of a quantity of large rockets fired off from the same source. This eruption was the longest of any we saw : a space of eight minutes and ten seconds elapsing from the first propulsion of the water from the basin, till it again subsided into the pipe. The jets were also much higher than in any of the former eruptions, yet none of them exceeded an hundred feet.

In the course of the afternoon and evening, there were several indications of a fresh eruption, but they only proved strong ebullitions, which always take place till the basin gets filled. At thirty-five minutes past nine we had another fine spectacle, which was little inferior to any of the preceding, and lasted for the space of five minutes.

The most enrapturing scene, however, that we beheld, was exhibited on the morning of the 30th. About ten minutes past five, we were roused by the roaring of Strockr, which blew up a great quantity of steam ; and when my watch stood at the full quarter, a crash took place as if the earth had burst, which was instantaneously succeeded by jets of water and spray, rising in a perpendicular column to the height of sixty feet. As the sun happened to be behind a cloud, we had no expectation of witnessing any thing more sublime than we had already seen ; but Strockr had not been in action above twenty minutes, when the Great Geyser, apparently jealous of her reputation, and indignant at our bestowing so much of our time and applause on her rival, began to thunder tremendously, and emitted such quantities of water and steam, that we could not be satisfied with a distant view, but hastened to the mound with as much curiosity as if it had been the first eruption we had beheld. However, if she was more interesting in point of magnitude, she gave the less satisfaction in point of duration, having again become tranquil in the course of five minutes ; whereas, her less gaudy, but more steady companion, continued to play till within four minutes of six o'clock.\*

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\* On my return this way from the north, about the middle of August, 1815, I again pitched my tent for two days beside these celebrated fountains, and found their operations still more magnificent and interesting than they were the preceding year. The Great Geyser continued to erupt every six

Our attention was so much taken up with these two principal fountains, that we had little time or inclination to watch the minutiae of the numerous inferior shafts and cavities with which the tract abounds. The Little Geyser erupted perhaps twelve times in the twenty-four hours; but none of its jets rose higher than eighteen or twenty feet, and generally they were about ten or twelve. The pipe of this spring opens into a beautiful circular basin about twelve feet in diameter, the surface of which exhibits incrustations equally beautiful with those of the Great Geyser. At the depth of a few feet, the pipe, which is scarcely three feet wide, becomes very irregular; yet its

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hours in a most imposing manner. In some of the eruptions, the jets seemed to be thrown much higher than any I observed last year, several of them reaching an elevation of not less than *an hundred and fifty feet*.

What rendered my second visit to the Geysers peculiarly interesting, was my discovery of the key to Strockr, by the application of which, I could make that beautiful spring play when I had a mind, and throw its water to nearly double the height observable in its natural eruptions. The morning after my arrival, I was awakened by its explosion about twenty minutes past four o'clock; and hastening to the crater, stood nearly half an hour contemplating its jet, and the steady and uninterrupted emission of the column of spray which followed, and which was projected at least an hundred feet into the air. After this, it gradually sunk into the pipe, as it had done the year before, and I did not expect to see another eruption till the following morning. However, about five o'clock in the afternoon, after a great quantity of the largest stones that could be found about the place had been thrown into the spring, I observed it begin to roar with more violence than usual; and, approaching the brink of the crater, I had scarcely time to look down to the surface of the water, which was greatly agitated, when the eruption commenced, and the boiling water rushed up in a moment, within an inch or two of my face, and continued its course with inconceivable velocity into the atmosphere. Having made a speedy retreat, I now took my station on the windward side, and was astonished to observe the elevation of the jets, some of them rising higher than *two hundred feet*; many of the fragments of stones were thrown much higher, and some of considerable size were raised to an invisible height. For some time, every succeeding jet seemed to surpass the preceding, till, the quantity of water in the subterraneous caverns being spent, they gave place to the column of steam, which continued to rush up with a deafening roar for nearly an hour.

The periodical evacuation of Strockr having been deranged by this violent experiment, no symptoms whatever of a fresh eruption appeared the following morning. As I wished, however, to see it play once more before I bid an everlasting farewell to these wonders of nature, and, especially, being anxious to ascertain the reality of my supposed discovery, I got my servant to assist me, about eight o'clock, in casting all the loose stones we could find into the spring. We had not ceased five minutes, when the wished-for phenomena recommenced, and the jets were carried to a height little inferior to what they had gained the preceding evening. At half past nine, I was obliged to set out on my journey; but often looked back on the thundering column of steam, and reflected with amazement at my having given such an impulse to a body which no power on earth could control,

depth has been ascertained to be thirty-eight feet. There is a large steam-hole at a short distance, to the north-west of the Little Geyser, which roars and becomes quiescent with the operations of that spring. A little further down the tract are numerous apertures, some of which are very large, and, being full of clear boiling water, they discover to the spectator the perilous scaffolding on which he stands. When approaching the brink of many of them, he walks over a dome of petrified morass, hardly a foot in thickness, below which is a vast boiling abyss, and even this thin dome is prevented from gaining a due consistence, by the humidity and heat to which it is exposed. Near the centre of these holes is situated the Little Strockr, a wonderfully amusing little fountain, which darts its waters in numerous diagonal columns every quarter of an hour.

Nor is it in this direction alone that orifices and cavities abound. In a small gully close to the Geyser, is a number of holes, with boiling water; to the south of which, rises a bank of ancient depositions, containing apertures of a much larger size than the rest. One of these is filled with beautifully clear water, and discovers to a great depth various groups of incrustations, which are very tempting to the eye of the beholder. The depth of this reservoir is not less than fifty feet. On the brow of the hill, at the height of nearly two hundred feet above the level of the Great Geyser, are several holes of boiling clay; some of which produce sulphur, and the efflorescence of alum; and at the base of the hill, on the opposite side, are not less than twenty springs, which proves that its foundations are entirely perforated with veins and cavities of hot water.

About eleven o'clock, we were under the necessity of lifting our tents, and removing from a place where we had seen some of the grandest of the works of God; and proceeded on to Haukadal, which lies at the distance of three quarters of a mile to the north of the Geysers. The present occupant is in good circumstances, and possessed of a very frank and obliging disposition. He conducted us into the house, which is uncommonly orderly and clean, and felt no small degree of pleasure in telling us of the different foreign guests that had visited him. He pur-

chased a copy of the New Testament, as did also a young man in the vicinity of the Geysers.

As we had rode on about half an hour before our baggage horses, we went a little to the west of Haukadal, to see the remains of St. Martin's bath. On the eastern brink of the small river which intersects the plain, is a large stone, eight feet in length, by about five in diameter, the one end of which projecting into the water, contains a small hole about twice the size of a man's hand, through which boiling water issued about twenty years ago. It is now quite dry, and in a great measure filled up with minute depositions which have been left on the subsiding of the water. Forty years ago, there was another sharp point attached to the stone, in which was a pipe conveying cold water to the bath, which was situated below the projection, so that those who bathed had it in their power to cool or heat the bath at pleasure, by opening either of the cocks fixed in the pipes. The hot water still issues forth in the middle of the river. In the days of ignorance and superstition, this bath was supposed to possess miraculous powers; and numbers resorted to it from various parts, in order to find relief from the diseases with which they were afflicted.

The general appearance of the intervening ground between the Geysers and Haukadal plainly indicates, that, in former times, it also has been the seat of hot springs. Indeed, the whole tract consists of a stream of lava that has flowed down into the plain from some of the mountains to the north of Haukadal, and which appears, on advancing as far as the Geysers, to have stopped, and thrown up the mountain called Laugafell, at the base of which these springs are situated. When we consider the remoteness of the period at which this must have happened, it appears truly surprising that subterraneous heat should still exist, in the degree necessary to account for the stupendous operations of the springs, while it has never so far accumulated as to produce a volcanic eruption.

Our way now lay over a considerable portion of this lava, which was for the most part covered with heath, but every now and then presented springs from which a large

quantity of cold crystalline water issued into the plain. The surface also exhibited in many places, bushes of willow and birch, but scarcely ever of that size to entitle them to the name of underwood. On crossing Fliotsâ, a broad but shallow river, we came to a hamlet called Holum, where, as it was the last house on this side of the desert, we regaled ourselves with a plentiful draught of cream. The family, which was numerous, looked exceedingly poor; and, as they had only an old defective copy of the second part of the Old Testament, I gave the children a copy of the New, in the hopes that the uncommonness of the gift might excite attention to its contents. Their mother immediately summoned them to give me a kiss, in token of their thankfulness for the boon. I now requested them to read a little, when the youngest girl, who might be about fourteen years of age, performed her task with much propriety, though somewhat intimidated by the presence of strangers. She then handed the Testament to her sister, who was upwards of eighteen, and read with so sonorous a voice, that two hundred people might have heard her with ease. It was pleasing to observe, from her manner, and the emphasis she laid on the proper words, that she not only understood, but seemed to feel the importance of what she read. It was part of the evangelic history of the sufferings of the Redeemer.\* After making a remark or two on the importance of the Holy Scriptures, and the necessity of perusing them with diligence, we proceeded on our journey, followed by the blessings of a grateful family.

We proceeded in a north-easterly direction till about seven in the evening, when we encamped for the night, surrounded by desert plains and volcanic mountains. Next morning, it being the Lord's Day, we assembled in Captain Von Scheel's tent, when one of the servants read the third and fourth chapters of the Gospel by John, in Icelandic; after which we were under the necessity of prosecuting our journey, the horses having eaten all the

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\* On my return this way the following year, I was still more gratified to find, that this girl had made an astonishing use of the New Testament during the winter; for there was not a passage to which I made the most indirect allusion, which she did not quote with the same facility and accuracy as if she had read it from the book.

grass in the vicinity during the night, and we had a ride of more than thirty miles to the next station. During the first three hours, we had rather a tedious ride up the steep ascent covered with broken lava, which extends along the west side of the mountain, till we gained its summit. From this elevation we had a most commanding prospect. What particularly struck us, was the majesty of the vast ice mountain, which extends in a westerly and northerly direction, to the distance of not less than an hundred miles across the interior of the island, forming but one connected mass of ice and snow. At the spot on which we now stood, it was in our power to receive strong mental impressions either of heat or cold, according to the direction in which we turned. When we looked to the west and north, we had nothing before us but regions of ever-during ice; whereas, on turning to the south, we were reminded by the clouds of smoke ascending from the Geysers, of the magazines of fire that lay concealed in that neighborhood.

In our descent we came again to the Hvítâ, or White river, near its egress from a large lake, to which it gives the name of Hvítâr-vatn. The whole of the western margin of this lake is lined with magnificent glaciers, which, before meeting the water, assume a hue of the most beautiful green. It abounds with excellent fish, and used to be much frequented in former times by the peasants in the south. At the fording-place, the river may be about an hundred yards across. It is the most formidable river in this quarter of Iceland; and is often unfordable for weeks together, when travellers, coming from the desert, are not unfrequently reduced to great straits, by the consumption of the food they had provided for their journey.

On the afternoon of Monday, the first of August, we commenced the worst stage on our whole journey. Our road, which at times was scarcely visible, lay along the west side of the Hof, or Arnarfell Yökul, a prodigious ice mountain. We rode at no great distance from it for the space of twenty hours, and were all the time exposed to a cold piercing wind which blew from that quarter. Our way was gloomy in the extreme. To whatever side we turned, nothing was visible but the devastations of ancient fires, or regions of perpetual frost. In the afternoon we

crossed the Yökulsâ, or river of the ice mountains, the fording of which is attended with considerable danger on account of the depth, rapidity, and turbidness of the current.

About noon, the next day, we gained the summit of the mountain-pass, and began to descend on the other side. The descent was at first exceedingly stony and precipitous, and in many places we could not discover any track. There were, however, heaps of stones cast up at various distances to point out the way, and in some places a heap of bones, from which we could conclude, that the horses of some former travellers had fallen a sacrifice to the badness of the road, while it at the same time warned us of the danger to which our own were exposed. After travelling over several wreaths of snow, and descending about four miles, we approached the valley of Eyafjord. The change in the prospect was indescribably delightful. The green grass with which the valley was richly clad, the beautiful river by which it was intersected, the cottages which lay scattered on both sides, and the sheep and lambs which were grazing in every direction, and which, from their distance below us, appeared only as small specks; these circumstances, combined with the height of the mountains that boldly faced each other, and then sloped gently down into the valley, proved an agreeable relief to the eye, which for four days had scarcely beheld a tuft of grass, or indeed any thing but stones and snow. Our very horses seemed to be animated with the prospect before them, and mended their pace of their own accord. At half past two, we arrived at the foot of the descent, which altogether could not be less than two thousand five hundred feet.

We made the best of our way to the first farm in the valley, which is called Tiörnabæ, and lay at a little distance before us. It is situated exactly in the middle of the valley, upon a beautiful green mount, and consists of several houses which lie together in a cluster, besides smaller ones for the cattle at a short distance from each other. In general, the Icelandic houses are all constructed in the same manner. The walls, which may be about four feet in height by six in thickness, are composed of alternate layers of earth and stone, and incline a little

inwards, when they are met by a sloping roof of turf, supported by a few beams which are crossed by twigs and boughs of birch. The roof always furnishes good grass, which is cut with the scythe at the usual season. In front, three doors generally present themselves, the tops of which form triangles, and are almost always ornamented with vanes. The middle door opens into a dark passage, about thirty feet in length, by five in breadth, from which entrances branch off on either side, and lead to different apartments, such as, the stranger's room, which is always the best in the house, the kitchen, weaving room, &c. and at the inner end of the passage lies the Badstofa, or sleeping apartment, which also forms the sitting and common working-room of the family. In many houses this room is in the garret, to which the passage communicates by a dark and dangerous staircase. The light is admitted through small windows in the roof, which generally consist of the amnion of sheep, though of late years glass has got more into use. Such of the houses as have windows in the walls, bear the most striking resemblance to the exterior of a bastion. The smoke makes its escape through a hole in the roof; but this, it is to be observed, is only from the kitchen, as the Icelanders never have any fire in their sitting-room, even during the severest cold in winter. Their beds are arranged on each side of the room, and consist of open bedsteads raised about three feet above the ground. They are filled with sea-weed, feathers, or down, according to the circumstances of the peasant; over which is thrown a fold or two of wadmel, and a coverlet of divers colors. Though the beds are extremely narrow, the Icelanders contrive to sleep in them by couples, by lying head to foot. Sometimes the inside of the rooms are panelled with boards, but generally the walls are bare, and collect much dust, so that it is scarcely possible to keep any thing clean. It is seldom the floor is laid with boards, but consists of damp earth, which necessarily proves very unhealthy.

In the stranger's room is a long table with a parallel bench, next to the wall on the one side, and the place of chairs is commonly supplied on the other by large chests, containing the clothes, valuables, &c. of the inhabitants. From the ceiling are also suspended numerous habiliments,

and articles of domestic economy ; and in some houses, a bed is put up here with curtains, for the accommodation of travellers. Foreigners always complain of the insupportable stench and filth of the Icelandic houses, and, certainly, not without reason ; yet I question much if these evils do not exist nearly in the same degree in the Highlands of Scotland, the country hamlets of Ireland, or the common Bauer huts in Germany.

One of the side doors in front, opens into what is called the *Skemma*, a separate apartment containing dried fish and other winter-stores, riding accoutrements, &c. The other door is that of the smithy, which, however, in some parts of the island, stands by itself. To these are appended several smaller out-houses for the reception of the cows, and, at a short distance, are those appropriated for the sheep. The whole, together with the hay stacks in the yard, forms a group not altogether unpleasant to the eye of the traveller on approaching it.

The numerous flocks of sheep which surrounded Tiörnabæ, convinced us that the peasant was in good circumstances. On riding up to the door he came out to us, and after learning who we were, he conducted us, with looks of kindness, into the best room in the house, and immediately provided us with cream to quench our thirst till his wife got something prepared for us to eat. On learning that I had Bibles with me, the peasant, who is a young man, and newly married, regretted that he had not been able, as yet, to furnish his house with a copy, and expressed a wish to see one of those I had in my trunks. Having taken a Bible and a New Testament to show his wife, he soon returned, having resolved to take both, and paid the price with the utmost cheerfulness. I had scarcely turned to re-enter my tent, when two servant girls came running with money in their hands, and wished each to have a New Testament.

Taking into consideration the remoteness of the surrounding cottages from the nearest market-place to which it was intended to forward Bibles next year, I sent for two of the poorest people in the vicinity, and gave each of them a Testament. One of them had a Danish Bible, which he endeavored, as well as he could, to collect the sense of, but he understood the language very imperfectly.

He thanked me repeatedly, with tears in his eyes, and rode home quite overjoyed at the gift he had received. The other, a young man about nineteen, had been dispatched by his poor and aged parents, to learn the truth of the message that had been sent them. There was an uncommon degree of humble simplicity in his countenance. On receiving the Testament, it was hardly possible for him to contain his joy. As a number of people had now collected round the door of my tent, I caused him to read the third chapter of the Gospel of John. He had scarcely begun, when they all sat down, or knelt on the grass, and listened with the most devout attention. As he proceeded, the tears began to trickle down their cheeks, and they were all seemingly much affected. The scene was doubtless as new to them as it was to me. The landlady especially seemed deeply impressed with the truths she had heard, and remained some time after the others were gone, together with an aged female, who every now and then broke out into exclamations of praise to God, for having sent "his clear and pure word" among them. It is impossible for me to describe the pleasure I felt on this occasion. I forgot all the fatigues of travelling over the mountains; and, indeed, to enjoy another such evening, I could travel twice the distance.

Early next morning we pursued our route down the valley. The ride was the most agreeable imaginable. The valley is well inhabited, being covered with luxuriant verdure, and affording an excellent pasturage to the sheep and cattle, which form the principal riches of the Iceland peasant. The mountains by which it is sheltered on both sides, are between 3000 and 4200 feet in height; and are clad with grass more than half way up to the summit. The cottages looked far superior to those in the south, and the churches, several of which we passed, had also a more decent appearance.

A little farther on, we came to Hrafnagil, the residence of the very Rev. Magnus Erlandson, Dean of the Eyafjord district. On delivering a letter to him, which I had from the Bishop, he kindly told me, that, independent of the Bishop's recommendation, I should have found him ready to lend me all the assistance in his power, in the promotion of the good work in which I was engaged; and as

he was to commence his autumnal visitation the day following, he promised to inform the clergy of his district of the new edition of the Scriptures, and request them to institute an inquiry into the state of their parishes with respect to Bibles, that the necessary quantity of copies might be sent to this quarter.

About four o'clock we arrived at the factory of Akur-eyri, which is one of the principal trading stations on the northern coast of Iceland. It is situated on the west side of the Eyafjord bay, and consists of three merchants' houses, several storehouses and cottages, amounting in all to about eighteen or twenty. The trade is much the same with that of the other stations, consisting chiefly in bartering rye and other articles of foreign produce for wool, woollen goods, salted mutton, &c. It was formerly famous for its herring-fishery; the herrings frequenting the bay in such quantities, that between 180 and 200 barrels have been caught at a single draught; but they have of late years almost entirely disappeared, to the no small disadvantage of the peasantry in the district, who were furnished with them at the rate of a rix-dollar per barrel.

On the 5th, I was happy in having an opportunity of executing a commission which I had received from Bishop Vidalin. Previous to my departure from Reykiavik, his lordship jokingly said, that, on my arrival in the north, it would be in my power to settle a serious dispute which had arisen between two of his clergy, and that he invested me with full power to that effect. The subject of difference was a copy of the Scriptures, which had been lent from a church on the Mainland, but had been so long in possession of that of Grimsey, that the priest refused to give it up to the church to which it originally and properly belonged. Nor can his unwillingness to part with the treasure be matter of surprise, when it is taken into consideration, that it was the only copy on an island lying at the distance of sixty miles from the Mainland, and that there was scarcely an individual among its inhabitants who could purchase a copy, though sold at the most moderate price, even supposing, what rarely or ever happens, that a Bible were exposed for sale in any of the northern districts. Finding that the clergyman was equally poor, I not only gave a copy to the parish gratis, but also one to

himself, in the conviction, that without making the Scriptures part of his daily study, he would be but very indifferently qualified to instruct his parishioners in the will of God. The same evening I sold a Bible and a New Testament to a peasant, who had come to town from a neighboring parish on purpose to buy them. His wife had been in town in the forenoon, and though she was requested to wait till the general distribution took place, the desire of obtaining copies excited in the family on her return, was so great, that her husband could get no rest till he set off on purpose to try if his application would not be more successful. I still endeavored to persuade him to wait, as I had got so few copies; but he would take no refusal, and insisted, that if he did not get the Bible now, I would at least receive the payment, that he might be sure of a copy when it came. Besides what I gave him, he wished to have six New Testaments, that each of his children might be furnished with a copy.

We were honored, the day following, with a visit from Conferenceraad Thorarinsson, the Governor or Amtman of the northern and eastern quarters of the island. After bidding me welcome to Iceland, he expressed, in very high terms, his approbation of the object of my journey, and informed me that he had received an official communication from the Sysselmand of one of the eastern districts, relative to a quantity of Bibles and New Testaments which had arrived at one of the trading stations.

The same day, I formed a most interesting and valuable acquaintance with the Sysselmand, Secretary Brieme, whom I accompanied in the evening to Kiarnè, the place of his residence, about two miles to the south of Akureyri. On entering the house, I was first shown into the Secretary's office, which contains a collection of books of minor importance, such as miscellanies, journals, &c.; from the office I was conducted into his parlor, where I found two excellent libraries; the one consisting of books on law, political economy, &c.; those in the other were of a mixed nature, but all works of merit and importance. After a short interval, Mrs. Brieme and the family were introduced, all of whom had something very interesting in their appearance; and having partaken of a dish of blue berries and cream, I was desired to walk up stairs and see

Mrs. B.'s library, which I found in a neat little room, well arranged, and consisting, for the most part, of choice theological works. Mrs. B. is distinguished for her piety; and, besides attending to the management of a numerous family, she devotes a considerable portion of her time to the education of her children, and the improvement of her own mind. Her library contains about an hundred volumes. Among the English authors, of which she possessed translations, either in Icelandic or Danish, I observed Hervey's Meditations, Newton on the Prophecies, Blair's Lectures on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Sherlock on Death, &c. I was also pleased to find a copy of the Icelandic New Testament of 1807; which, from the marks it contained, afforded proof of its having been read with attention. The Secretary has two Icelandic Bibles in folio; but he nevertheless intends to purchase some copies of the new edition for the greater convenience of his children.

From this interesting apartment, I proceeded to a large room adjoining, which is properly the bed-room of the servants. The beds were clean and neatly arranged, and what is but too little attended to in Iceland, the place was well aired. It gave me peculiar pleasure to be informed, that this apartment also formed the domestic chapel. Here, the whole family, which consists of twenty members, assembles every evening, when a psalm is sung, and, after a chapter of the Bible has been read, an appropriate prayer is presented by the head of the family. Besides this exercise, the Secretary spends an hour or two, in the long winter evenings, in reading to the family, while at work; and, what cannot be sufficiently commended, he has substituted the reading of the historical books of Scripture for that of the Sagas, which was formerly in universal use, and is still kept up by most of the peasants.

The exercise of domestic worship is attended to, in almost every family in Iceland, from Michaelmas to Easter. During the summer months the family are so scattered, and the time of their returning from their various employments so different, that it is almost impossible for them to worship God in a collective capacity; yet there are many families, whose piety is more lively and zealous, that make conscience of it the whole year round. The inhabitants

of this, and several of the neighboring vallies, are the most enlightened and intelligent of any on the island. They pay great attention to the education of their children; and, being favored with a richer share of the bounties of nature than their brethren in other districts, they are better enabled to provide them with such books as are necessary for their instruction and improvement. Yet, even here, the Bible is a scarce book; and instances have been known of peasants offering five and six dollars for a copy, without being able to obtain it.

On the 7th, which was the Lord's day, as there was no sermon in the vicinity, I ascended the rising ground behind the factory, and, falling in with a dry and sheltered spot, I lay down on the grass, and, after spending some time in prayer to the Father of Lights, and God of all my mercies, I took my Bible out of my pocket, and began to enjoy some of the heavenly strains of the sweet singer of Israel. While my thoughts were borne on high by the elevations of his sacred muse, I heard the notes of harmony behind me; which, on turning about, I found proceeded from a cottage, at a little distance to the left. The inhabitants, consisting of two families, had collected together for the exercise of social worship, and were sending up the melody of praise to the God of salvation. This practice is universal on the island. When there is no public service, the members of each family (or where there are more families they combine) join in singing several hymns; read the gospel and epistle for the day, a prayer or two, and one of Vidalin's sermons. Where the Bible exists, it is brought forward; and several chapters of it are read by the young people in the family.

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## CHAP. III.

Excursion to Holum—Translator of Milton—Ascent of the Yökul—Holum—Gisle Jonson—Cathedral—Gudbrand Thorlakson—Removal of the Press—Situation and present state of Holum—Icelandic Meals—Extent of Hospitality—Return to Akur-eyri.

BEFORE setting out on my journey to the east, I resolved to make a short excursion to the neighborhood of Skagafjord, in order to deliver two letters which I had received, to the Deans, from Bishop Vidalin, relative to the distribution of the Scriptures in that quarter. We accordingly left Akur-eyri in the forenoon of the 8th of August, for Mödruvalla Abbey, the residence of the Conferenceraad Thorarinsson, where we arrived about one o'clock.

We were received by the Conferenceraad and family in the most polite and engaging manner. It gave me pleasure to find that this gentleman entered fully into the views and design of the Bible Society; and, on my mentioning how desirable it would be to have a similar institution formed in Iceland, he highly approved of the idea, and engaged to lend his aid in its formation. He also kindly undertook to have ready for me, by my return from Holum, a copy of the Bishop's letter to the Dean, authenticated by his own signature, to serve as an introduction to the clergy in the east, for which I had not made any provision before I left Reykiavik, not having had any idea that I should proceed in that direction.

A little past three, I took leave of this most respectable family, and proceeded up the dales accompanied by the clergyman, Sira Jon Jonson of Audabrecka, whom the Conferenceraad had sent for on purpose to conduct me to the next station. I not only found in Sira Jon, the learned and intelligent clergyman, but the tender-hearted phi-

lanthropist, and the pious and zealous servant of Jesus Christ. He is forty-two years of age, rather little in stature, and remarkably active. He was five years corrector of the school at Holum, and one year employed in the same way in Reykiavik, where, by his access to the libraries, he has had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with foreign literature, in a greater degree than most of his brethren. I was surprised to hear with what readiness he could quote the German and French authors, how perfectly he was versed in the principles of deism, and the intimate knowledge he had of the books that have been written in defence of revealed religion. He also quoted several English writers, particularly Young, who is his favorite poet. In his pastoral capacity he is strictly orthodox; zealous and indefatigable in his endeavors to instruct his parishioners in the doctrines and duties of religion; and strict in his regard to character, in the admission of communicants to the Lord's Supper. He is particularly attentive to the rising generation, and views their instruction as forming the weightiest and most important part of his ministerial charge. His parish is one of the most populous, containing upwards of four hundred souls; yet he keeps a register, in which their characters and circumstances are regularly entered.

Besides attending to the spiritual wants of his people, Sira Jon devotes a considerable portion of his time to the healing of their bodies, and is celebrated all over the north for his skill in medicine. Since last new year, he has had more than two hundred cases. His house is literally a Bethesda. On passing it, I alighted, and was conducted into a small room, which I found answered the purposes of a parlor, a library-hall, and an apothecary's shop. In the loft were several people who had come for medical advice. His stock of foreign medicines is but small, owing to their high price, and the difficulty he has in obtaining them; and though he makes all the use he can of the plants which grow on his native soil, he finds numberless cases to which they cannot be applied. He seems to take great delight in the study of this art, and views it as, what it is in reality, a very suitable appendage to the pastoral character.

As we passed along the foot of the mountains, I was so

charmed with the conversation of my interesting companion, that I forgot the length of the road, and was quite regardless of the romantic nature of the scenery, which must otherwise have attracted a considerable share of my attention. We had scarcely entered the beautiful valley called Oxnadal, when Sira Jon made a sudden stop, and pointing to a house on the opposite side of the river, told me it was the abode of their celebrated poet. "What!" I exclaimed, somewhat taken by surprise, "is it there the translator of Milton resides?" "Yes," was his reply; "he is still alive, and it is some time since he finished his translation of that sublime poem." I now stopped my horse, and felt at a loss to determine whether I should return to the poet's that evening, or postpone my visit till my return from the west. The latter I was under the necessity of adopting, as my baggage horses had gone on before me.

After riding about an hour farther up the valley we reached the abode of Sira Halgrimr, who is clergyman of the church of Backa on the opposite side of the valley. He is a man of about six or eight and thirty, and is distinguishedly serious and modest. A deep sense of genuine piety seemed to penetrate his whole frame. His wife also appeared to be an excellent Christian, and exemplified in her own person and the cleanliness and arrangement of her house, that part of the Apostle's description of the Christian character: "Whatsoever things are of good report," &c. I was much gratified to observe the serious and grateful manner in which they partook of the bounties of Providence. It is universally the custom, in Icelandic families, to give thanks to God with clasped hands, before and after meals. When the first thanksgiving is finished, the guests turn to the master of the house, (the mistress never sits at table, being engaged in serving,) and say: *Gif mér mat med Guds fridr,* "Let me now partake with the peace of God;" and when the meal is over, and thanks have been returned to the Author of all good, they salute both master and mistress with a kiss, and thank them for their kindness.

From these clergymen I learned, that the standard of morality was never higher in the north of Iceland than it is at the present day. Crimes are almost unheard of; and such as do make their appearance, are of the less

flagrant and notorious kind. The sin of drunkenness, to which certain individuals were addicted, previous to the commencement of the war, has been in a great measure annihilated by the high price of spirituous liquors. Some would draw the conclusion from this circumstance, that the virtue of the Icelanders is merely accidental; but He who is perfectly acquainted with the sinful propensities of the human heart, hath taught *all* his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" and I shall ever admire the propriety of the remark made by Sira Jon: "Our poverty is the bulwark of our happiness."

Happening, on the morning of the 9th, to meet one of the Deans, to whom I had letters from the Bishop, I was fortunately enabled to make such arrangements with him relative to the disposal of the copies of the Scriptures which had been sent to Skagafjord, as rendered it unnecessary for me to proceed to that quarter. About ten o'clock, I rode in company with Sira Jon, and Sira Halgrimr, to Bægisâ, the dwelling of the poet, Sira Jon Thorlakson. Like most of his brethren at this season of the year, we found him in the meadow, assisting his people in hay-making. On hearing of our arrival, he made all the haste home which his age and infirmity would allow; and, bidding us welcome to his humble abode, he ushered us into the apartment, where he translated my countryman, Milton, into Icelandic. The door is not quite four feet in height, and the room may be about eight feet in length, by six in breadth. At the inner end is the poet's bed, and close to the door, over against a small window not exceeding two feet square, is a table where he commits to paper the effusions of his muse.

Of his translation of Paradise Lost, only the three first books have been printed. They are inserted in the publications of the Icelandic Literary Society; but as this Society closed their labors in the year 1796, our poet was deprived of a channel through which he might communicate the remainder of his translation to the public. To print it at his own expense was altogether out of the question, as the whole of his annual income from the parishes of Bægisâ and Backa does not exceed thirty dollars, and even of this sum he must give nearly the one half to Sira Halgrimr, who officiates for him in the latter parish.

That the entire poem has never been printed, is a real

loss to Scandinavian literature; as it not only rises superior to any other translation of Milton, but rivals, and in many instances, in which the Eddaic phraseology is introduced, almost seems to surpass the original itself. Besides supporting its prevailing character, a quality required of every translator, Thorlakson has nicely imitated its peculiar turns, and more refined modifications; and though, on certain occasions, he has found it impossible to give the particular effect of certain sounds, yet this defect is more than compensated, by the multiplicity of happy combinations, where none exist in the original, which is to be ascribed to the richness the Icelandic possesses of such combinations, and the complete command the translator has had of his native language.

For some years past, our poet has been occupied with a translation of Klopstock's Messiah. The first fourteen books are ready, and the fifteenth was begun last spring. He acknowledged, however, the impossibility of his reaching the bold and adventurous heights of that poet so happily as he had done the flights of Milton, being now upwards of seventy years of age. Alluding to his halting, he said, it could not be matter of surprise, since Milton had used him several years as his riding-horse, and spurred him unmercifully through the celestial, chaotic, and infernal regions. He has also translated Pope's Essay on Man, besides different Danish and German poems, and has composed numerous original pieces of a miscellaneous nature.

The situation of his abode is truly poetic. It lies near the junction of three beautiful vallies, the rivers of which also join at the same time, and form a broad and rapid stream. Close behind the farm is a number of beautiful cascades, at various heights up the mountain; and the prospect is bounded on every side by stupendous mountains, some of which exceed 4000 feet in height, and assume at the summit the most rugged and fantastic forms.

After spending about an hour at Bægisâ, we proceeded on to Mirkâ, the residence of Sira Jon Jonson, a venerable and intelligent man, of seventy-three years of age. He had already been apprised of my arrival in the north, and had just finished his investigation relative to the Scriptures, from which it appeared, that though his parish

be small, upwards of fifty of his parishioners had subscribed for the Bible. I was much edified by his pious conversation, and he seemed no less interested, on the other hand, by the accounts I gave him of the Bible Societies, and other instruments employed by Providence in these latter days for advancing the reign of righteousness and peace. Having procured me a guide for the following day at Flaugasæl, the last house in the valley, he returned, after giving me the parting kiss, and wishing me the divine blessing on my undertaking. As the inhabitants of the cottage were extremely poor, I gave them a copy of the Scriptures. It was a treasure they had never had before, and what they did not suppose they would ever be so happy as to possess.

One of the principal inconveniences to which the inhabitants of the vallies in the north of Iceland are exposed, is what they call the *Skrida*, or falling of part of the surface of the mountain into the valley below. It generally begins high up, by the disruption of a cliff, or the loosening of the earth after rain, which, accumulating fresh strength, and receiving new accessions as it proceeds, spreads wider and wider, and, with a tremendous noise, hurls every thing before it into the middle of the plain. It is no uncommon thing for whole cottages to be interred by such disruptions. In order to be secure from inundations, they are generally erected close to the foot of the mountains, and are thus constantly exposed to accidents of this nature.

At half past five next morning, the peasant of Flaugasæl came to guide us across the mountain. The first six miles lay alternately across bogs and deep gullies, which have been cut by the mountain torrents. About nine we came to the termination of the deep bed of the river, along which we had passed, where it received its contents from a precipice, rising to a great height before us, and which it was necessary for us to pass ere we could proceed. The mountains on both sides were so precipitous, that we found it impossible any longer to ride along them, and betook ourselves to the snow, with which the hollow was filled, the ice below being sufficiently strong to prevent us from falling through into the river. At times, we had to lead our horses over large fissures and rents, through

which we could hear the water at a great distance below us.

About noon we reached the summit, where we stopped a little, in order to give the horses some rest. Though at least 2000 feet above the level of the sea, we were surrounded by mountains of a still greater height, on which there was scarcely any snow, and which every where afforded the most lucid proofs of their submarine formation.

Descending from the mountain, I came, about four o'clock, to Holum, the limit of my journey in this direction for the present year. I here received a cordial welcome from Mr. Gisle Jonson. He immediately led me into the hall of the former episcopal residence, and told me this should be my lodging during my stay at Holum.

After conversing some time on the object of my journey, and the great things which had been achieved at Holum in the publication of the Icelandic Bible, I went with Mr. Jonson to see the church. It has been an elegant structure, and is still, beyond comparison, the best church in Iceland. It is built of red sand-stone, which abounds at no great distance up the valley. The principal thing in the inside deserving of notice is the altar-piece, which contains an excellent representation of the crucifixion, cut in wood, and finely gilt. There is also a large silver chalice on the altar; which, together with the altar-piece, was presented by the Pope to Jon Ogmundson, the first bishop of Holum. The wall on both sides of the altar is adorned with portraits of several of the Holum bishops. Next to the altar, on each side, is one of the worthy Gudbrand Thorlakson, taken at two different periods of his life. He lies interred directly before the altar, beneath a large marble stone.

On coming out of the church, I desired Mr. Jonson to show me where the printing-office stood, at which Gudbrand printed the first edition of the Icelandic Bible. Folding his hands together, and alluding to the removal of the school and episcopal see, "Alas!" said he, "we have also been deprived of our press, and the office has been converted into a stable!" Both of us lamented that the testaments of pious men should suffer from sacrilegious hands, and their property be applied in a manner different from that which they have unequivocally specified."

with their dying breath. Gudbrand erected the printing-press at much expense, and spared no trouble in rendering it complete, many of the utensils being of his own invention and workmanship; and, in his last will, bequeathed it to the bishopric as a perpetual property, for the purpose of securing the constant supply of fresh editions of the Scriptures, and other useful books.

Though no less than three editions of the Icelandic Bible were printed in this valley, scarcely a copy is now to be found among its inhabitants. They were overjoyed to hear that provision had been made for supplying their wants; and the individuals who received copies from me, expressed their gratitude in the most lively manner.

By the whole of Mr. Jonson's family I was treated with the utmost kindness and attention. On my arrival I was served with coffee, and towards evening Mrs. Jonson provided an excellent dish of boiled rice and milk, which was followed by smoked mutton boiled and hashed, and served up in a large pewter plate, out of which we ate in common with our forks. Our only beverage was milk and rich cream. The ordinary diet of the Icelanders is extremely simple. In the morning they breakfast on *skyr*, a dish of coagulated milk, resembling our curds in Scotland, only it is sour; to which they use plenty of sweet milk or cream, and sometimes give it a peculiar flavor, by mixing with it blue and juniper berry juice. Their dinner consists of dried fish and butter; the latter of which is generally sour, it being a common practice to allow it to acquire a strong degree of rancidity, after which it will keep for almost any length of time. For supper they have either *skyr*, a little bread and cheese, or porridge made of the Icelandic moss. To a foreigner this is not only the most healthy, but the most palatable of all the articles of Icelandic diet. On particular occasions, such as Sundays, and other holidays, they eat boiled mutton, rye-porridge, and milk. At Christmas, the first day of summer, and harvest-home, extra feasts are given to the servants, consisting of fresh mutton, milk-porridge, and bread—an article which this class of the inhabitants seldom taste throughout the year. Their common beverage is *blanda*, a kind of whey mixed with water; the whey itself, which they call *syra*; and milk, which they generally drink warm.

When the hour of rest approached, I was conducted by my kind host and hostess into a back apartment, where was an ancient but excellent bed, on which, I had every reason to conclude, more than one of the Holum Bishops had reposed. A ceremony now took place, which exhibits, in the strongest light, the hospitality and innocent simplicity of the Icelandic character. Having wished me a good night's rest, they retired, and left their eldest daughter to assist me in pulling off my pantaloons and stockings, a piece of kindness, however, which I would a thousand times rather have dispensed with, as it was so repugnant to those feelings of delicacy to which I had been accustomed. In vain I remonstrated against it as unnecessary. The young woman maintained it was the custom of the country, and their duty to help the weary traveller. When I had got into bed, she brought a long board, which she placed before me to prevent my falling out; and, depositing a basin of new milk on a table close to my head, bade me good night, and retired. Such I afterwards found to be universally the custom in Icelandic houses. Where there are no daughters in the family, the service is performed by the landlady herself, who considers it a great honor to have it in her power to show this attention to a stranger.

On the 11th, I left Holum, and, with some difficulty, reached the summit of the mountain on my return. But the declivity of the Yökul was so steep, and the snow so much softened by the rain, that my horse could not keep his feet under me, nor could I possibly walk myself, so that taking him at the length of the bridle, and dragging him a little on, we both slid down, without halting, to the distance of fifty yards, when we came again to stones and clay. Having taken this position, I enjoyed the sight of my man and the baggage horses sliding towards me in the same manner, though at times, their descent looked rather serious, from the greater velocity with which the heavier horses were borne down upon those that went before.

On the 12th, I arrived at Mirkâ, where the worthy pastor was waiting my arrival, together with his son, who had come from a cottage in the neighborhood, in order to purchase a copy of the Bible. On opening one of my boxes, I was surrounded by an interesting group, each of whom

got copies to look at, and made such simple, but pious and apposite remarks, as both astonished and affected me. One young peasant remarked, that I was going round the world like the apostles, carrying the gospel to every creature; a truth which I never felt with such force as on this occasion. A fresh instance of the general intelligence of the Icelanders occurred on this occasion. A servant girl of about sixteen, happening to take up a map of the island which I had dropped, quite astonished me, by pointing to the different places with all the readiness of a professed geographer. Finding that she was very desirous of having a New Testament, I made her a present of one, which she instantly kissed, and seemed quite transported with the gift.

As I passed down the valley, the people left their hay-making, and came running to the road in order to see me, and have some conversation about the Scriptures; when they wished a thousand blessings might descend on me, and the good Christians who had sent me to Iceland. Some of them were very particular in their inquiries about the reasons that induced us to do so much good to Iceland; while others satisfied themselves with respect to the size of the present edition, and the source from which it had been derived.

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## CHAP. IV.

Journey to Vopnafjord—Public Worship and Catechising at Håls—Icelandic Dress—Pauperage—Piety—Lava—Salmon River—Husavik—Hot Springs of Reykiahverf—Lava, near Myvatn—Traces of Volcanic Eruptions in the Bible—Eruptions of Leirhnukr and Krabla—Church of Reykiahlid—Myvatn—Sulphur Mountain—Hot Springs—Ascent of Krabla—Boiling Pool in the Crater—Obsidian Mountain—Desert—Dangerous River—Grimstad—Rural Happiness—Computation of Time—Desert—Hof in Vopnafjord.

HAVING, after my return to the factory, digested a plan with the Secretary, relative to the circulation of the Scriptures in this part of the island, and furnished myself with two fresh horses, I took my departure from Akureyri in the afternoon of the 13th of August. Crossing the mountain which bounds the valley of Eyafjord on the east, I arrived in a few hours at Håls, where there is a good church, and an excellent glebe. Immediately on approaching it, I easily perceived that the clergyman must be in good circumstances, from the verdure and extent of the *tún*, and the number of cows, sheep, and goats, that were grazing around. Though nearly dark, Sira Sigurdr, the clergyman, had not yet left the meadow, where he was assisting his people at the hay; but, on being informed of my arrival, he made the best of his way home, and received me at a little distance from the house, in the kindest and most affectionate manner. Before reaching the door, we were met by his wife, who ran, asking, “Where is my guest?” and gave me a hearty welcome. I had scarcely entered the parlor, when I was served with excellent coffee; and, as there was plenty of room in the house, I was desired not to pitch my tent, but to accept of such accommodation as they could afford. Having read

the letter which I delivered to him from the Bishop, to whom he is related, Sira Sigurdr told me, he did not doubt but that his parishes, which are three in number, would take a considerable quantity of Bibles and New Testaments. A few copies of the edition of the New Testament, published in 1807, had been sent him for distribution; but they only went a little way, and tended rather to make the wants of the people more visible than afford them any adequate supply. He assured me they would buy copies with the utmost cheerfulness.

The next day, being the Lord's day, I was happy to find it was his turn to conduct divine worship at this place. There is only one service in the Icelandic churches, which seldom begins in any part of the island before noon, and in some places not before two o'clock. The reason of the hour being so late is, that the Icelanders have their sheep to collect and milk, the horses on which they are to ride to seek and drive home, and themselves to dress; which circumstances, taken in connexion with the length of the way many of them have to come, renders it impossible for them to meet sooner.

A little before church time, the mistress of the house and her two daughters made their appearance, richly dressed in the complete Icelandic costume, and had it been another day, I should certainly have spent some time in examining the various articles of which it was made up.\*

Though the morning was rainy, the church was well filled. Having gone through the altar-service, the clergyman went to the door, and taking a female by the hand, who had stood without all the while, he led her forward to her seat, and gave her a very appropriate address relative to her obligations arising from the experience of the Divine goodness in child-birth, and the importance of attending to the education of the two young immortals who

\* The most curious and fantastic part of the female costume is the head-dress. It consists of a *faldur* or turban made of white linen, and stiffened with an immense number of pins. It is generally between fifteen and twenty inches in height, roundish where it leaves the head, but instantly assuming a flattish shape, and after rising to the height of about twelve inches, by a curve backwards, it again bends forward, and terminates in a square form, not less than six inches in breadth. It is fastened to the head by means of a black, or dark colored silk handkerchief, which is wound round it several times, and, falling close behind the ears, completely hides the hair.

had been committed to her care. He then prayed for her, pronounced the blessing, and concluded by giving her the apostolic salutation. His sermon was founded on Psalm ciii. 10, 11, which he illustrated from the history of the Israelites, as referred to in the gospel for the day. Both in his sermon and prayer, he took particular notice of the mercy and loving kindness of God, in sending them a more abundant supply of the Holy Scriptures. When the ordinary service was over, he went into the middle of the church, and collecting the young people of both sexes around him, he catechised them, for about half an hour, from the subject of his sermon. This he did, with the view of gratifying a wish I had expressed the preceding evening, of being present at an Icelandic catechising. The exercise proved interesting in the highest degree. Though wholly unapprized of his intention, the youth replied to the questions he put to them, in the readiest and most apposite manner, and discovered an acquaintance with the cardinal points of revealed religion, which I have seldom seen equalled by those whose spiritual advantages are vastly superior. This exercise, equally instructive to the young and the aged, is but seldom attended to during the summer months, but in winter it forms a conspicuous and important part of public duty.

Before dismissing the congregation, he gave them intimation of the new supply of Bibles, and desired such as wished to have copies, to give him their names; and we had scarcely got into the house, when it was crowded with people; who, supposing the number of copies might prove insufficient, pushed forward with uncommon eagerness, each calling out, "Put me down for a Bible—me, for a Bible, and a New Testament—me, for *three* New Testaments," &c. While looking at the copy I had given to Sira Sigurdr, as a specimen, some of them seemed rather concerned about the smallness of the volume, (this being the first octavo edition of the Icelandic Bible;) but on being told by their pastor that it contained all the *canonical* books of Scripture, they were satisfied, and expressed the peculiar pleasure they felt in the idea that it would now be in their power to furnish their children with this infallible directory.

Inquiring into the circumstances of a poor-looking old

man, whom I saw employed in the most menial services, I found he was, what is called in Icelandic, a *Nidursetningr*, i. e. a poor person, who lives on the parish, has no fixed dwelling place, but is supported, by turns, among the inhabitants. As there are no alms-houses for the reception of the poor in Iceland, every farmer is obliged to maintain such as are sent him by the Hreppstiori, to whom the care of the poor is committed, and in case of refusal, is subjected to a very heavy penalty. To prevent the parishes from being over-burdened, the greatest care is taken that none be allowed to settle in any other than that in which he was born, except he can give security, that neither he, nor any of his family, shall ever be burdensome to the public. When any family happens to be so reduced, that it can no longer maintain itself, it is separated, and the members placed out in different households; and, if the husband, or wife, belong to a different part of the island, he is passed on to his native parish, perhaps never more to behold the wife of his youth. On such occasions, a scene presents itself the most affecting that can possibly be conceived. Though there may not be a single morsel in the house, with which to satisfy the craving appetite of four or five young starvelings, and though they are themselves emaciated with hunger, still they cleave to one another, and vow that famine, and even death itself, would be more supportable than a separation.

Monday the 15th, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, I left Hâls, accompanied by the clergyman, his son, and one of his servants, who accompanied us a few miles on our way. Immediately on setting out, we all took off our hats for about the space of five minutes, and implored the Divine mercy and protection. This laudable and impressive custom is universally practised, in such parts of Iceland as remain uncontaminated by the example of those foreigners who "live without God in the world." Before crossing, and after having crossed a river, the genuine Icelander also moves his hat, in token of the sense he entertains of his dependence on the Supreme Being; and the fishermen, when they put to sea, after they have rowed the boat into quiet water, at a short distance from the shore, take off their hats, and send up a prayer, committing themselves to the protection of God, and soliciting

his blessing on their labor. The road lay direct east, through a wide and fertile dale near the east end of which lies a beautiful and extensive lake, the margin of which exhibits in various places a bed of ancient lava, whose blackness is rendered still darker by the crystalline appearance of the water.

Skirting the northern margin of the lake, we crossed a broad morass, by means of a road of turf resembling an earthen wall, and proceeded along the west side of an ordinary mountain, which was clothed with dwarf willows and blue-berry bushes. The berries were quite in season, and afforded a most delicious refreshment. The way-marks, consisting of heaps of stones raised in a pyramidal form, were in excellent order, and at a short distance from each other, which, being an accommodation of no small importance to the traveller, brought to my mind Jeremiah xxxi. 21. "Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the high-way, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

On turning round the north end of the mountain, my attention was arrested by a noble cataract. The whiteness of the vast body of water, which was poured from a considerable height, and the cloud of vapor arising from the spray, were beautifully contrasted with the blackness of the lava on both sides. Skialfandafliot is one of the largest rivers in the north of Iceland. It is supposed to take its rise in the Klofa Yökul, not far from the opposite side of the island, and derives its name from the rapid and undulating motion with which the waters hurry forward to the ocean. They are of a light bluish color, like that of milk strongly diluted with water.

After passing this river, we pursued our way over a stream of rough lava, containing deep and gloomy chasms, which it required the utmost stretch of our ingenuity, combined with the instinctive skill of our steeds, to avoid. About six o'clock we arrived at the western bank of the Laxâ, which pursues its meandering course round the small capricious promontories raised by the lava, now moving heavily along, and now rushing down a gentle declivity with accelerated speed. Now and then a solitary salmon leaped above the surface of the water, and I

was struck on finding a variety of small rills flowing from the river into the domed cavities of the lava, whither the fish retreat, which accounts for their being caught at times in holes in the middle of the valley. Following the windings of the river for about an hour, we came opposite to a ferry-house ; and after hallooing for some time, a woman and a little girl caine to ferry us over. Looking at the boat, I observed to my servant that we must have mistaken the place ; and, on being told that it was the proper ferry, and that it was the ferry-boat which was rowing towards us : " Well," said I, " but I certainly will not venture my riding-horse in that vehicle." " Nor need you," was his reply ; " the horses are to *swim* across, and the boat is only for ourselves and the baggage." The answer was satisfactory ; but my curiosity was now excited by a mode of passage which I had never before witnessed. Having unloaded the horses, we drove them into the stream. They were almost instantly beyond their depth, and after a good deal of exertion and snorting, they reached in safety the opposite bank, and, giving themselves a shake or two, they set off for the house, being enticed by the verdure of the tún:

The next morning I left a Bible with the proprietor of the ferry, and rode forward to Husavik, where I was kindly welcomed by the factor, Mr. Baagoe, a native of Denmark. While dinner was preparing, I was conducted by Mr. B. into his garden, which I found well laid out, and in excellent order. Besides potatoes, cabbages, and greens, which grew in great abundance, it contained pretty large beds of parsnips, turnips, carrots, beans, peas, parsley, sallad, and onions. I certainly did not expect to meet with so many different vegetables in such perfection near the north-east corner of Iceland ; but this instance shows how much the ungenial influence of climate may be subdued by the energy of persevering and indefatigable industry. To this nursery the peasants, from a considerable distance, flock for seeds ; and, in the hands of its benevolent proprietor, it is rendered a source of relief to the poor in the vicinity.

Husavik consists of several stately wooden houses, a sulphur manufactory, and a number of cottages belonging to the workmen. Lying at the height of more than a

hundred feet above the level of the sea, the different articles of commerce are removed to and from the boats by means of a crane, which is fixed on the brow of a perpendicular precipice close to the store-houses. The harbor is reckoned one of the most dangerous on the island, on account of the rocks in the entrance, and its exposure to north and north-west winds, by which enormous masses of Greenland ice are driven into it. To secure a vessel here, no less than four strong cables are requisite, and each of these is borne up by fourteen or sixteen large casks, to prevent its coming in contact with the rocks.

Besides salted mutton, wool, &c. Husavik has, till very lately, exported annually a large quantity of refined sulphur; a mineral which has been produced in abundance by the mines around Myvatn, but is now more scanty, owing to their having been overwrought, through the injudicious conduct of the peasants, by whom the sulphur is dug up and carried on horseback to the factory. These mines in former times produced a clear profit of from ten to eighteen thousand rix-dollars. During the last forty years, about 220 *cwt.* of refined sulphur have, at an average, been annually exported from this harbor.

After dinner, I visited the rector, who is a good-looking young man of about thirty-three, and may be classed among the more learned of his order in Iceland. He entered at once into the Bible Society plan; assured me that his parishioners were in the greatest want of the sacred volume, and, with joy, accepted my proposal relative to his taking an active part in the distribution of the copies to be sent to this place. He insisted on accompanying me on my way as far as Reykiahverf, near which place are several remarkable boiling fountains. I examined them on the following day. Though their magnificence would bear no comparison with that of the Geysers, I certainly found them extremely interesting, and entitled to the second rank in the history of these remarkable phenomena. The more remarkable ones are three in number, and lie nearly in a direct line from north to south. The first, or northernmost spring, is by far the largest, the pipe of which opens into a perfectly circular basin, little inferior to that of the Great Geyser, measuring thirty-four feet and a half in diameter from north to south, and thirty-three from east to west.

On the south side of the same general mount, and only eight feet distant from the grand basin, is another irregular pipe or opening, which may be called the satellite of this fountain, and at first view appears to be connected with it; but a more narrow inspection of its operations shows, that it proceeds from a separate and independent source. On measuring its depth, which I could only effect by suspending the line over the middle of a long pole held across it by the men who were with me, I was surprised to find that the ebullitions abated somewhat of their fury, and when I attempted to draw up the line again, after I found it had reached the bottom, it was only by using the utmost exertion that I could effect it—so strongly was the stone which I had fixed to the end of the line attracted by a power communicating with the bottom of the pipe. The power of attraction was greatest while the stone was at rest, and diminished in proportion to its elevation, till it was raised about three feet, when it seemed to have got without the reach of its influence. The depth of the pipe was between fourteen and fifteen feet.

On the 18th, I proceeded in a southwesterly direction to Greniadarstad, the abode of Dean Scheving, to whom I had a letter of introduction. The Dean is an aged man, has the superintendence of eighteen parishes, and performs the duties of the ministerial office in the parish where he resides. According to the accounts he gave me, the oracles of God are extremely scarce in this part of the Island, and he did not suppose there were more than two Bibles in the whole of his parish. After drinking coffee, and having obtained a promise, that an inquiry should, without delay, be instituted, with the view of ascertaining the actual wants of the people with respect to the Scriptures, I prosecuted my journey towards Reykiahlid, the next station on the route to the east country. Crossing a swamp, that stretches towards the right into a valley called *Theianda-dal*, or the Valley of Silence, which the peasant informed me had formerly been inhabited, but had been depopulated by the plague, I came to the entrance of Laxârdal, which is not more than a hundred and fifty yards across, and the bed of the river is rendered still more narrow, by the lava which has

here been stopped in its course, and thrown up in every possible form. From the brink of the precipice on the west side, which may be about ninety feet of perpendicular height, you look down upon a number of roaring cataracts, formed by enormous masses of rock that have been dislodged from the side of the mountain, and presenting a most sublime and majestic scene. I now descended into the valley, and proceeded about two miles over a broken and extremely uneven tract of lava on the right side of the river, when I again forded it ; and, after passing numerous craters and cascades, together with some beautiful islands, on which were people making hay, I climbed up a winding and steep ascent, which conducted me into a desert, called *Myvats-sandar*, consisting entirely of sand, pumice, and other volcanic substances. For upwards of four hours there was not the smallest sign of vegetation to relieve the eye, nor could I meet with a single drop of water to quench my thirst.

Having gained the extremity of the sand, I encountered a prodigious stream of lava, which, having insinuated itself into the vallies that open into the plain where it has collected, I had to cross several times before I reached the limit of the day's journey. Of all the lavas I had yet seen, this appeared the freshest and most interesting. It is black as jet ; the blisters and cracks are of an immense size ; and most of the chasms are completely glazed, and present the most beautiful and grotesque stalactitic appearances. In some places it is spread out in large round cakes, the surface of which is covered with round diminutive elevations, resembling the coils in a roll of tobacco. Where the fiery stream has met with some interruption, and got time to cool, a crust has been formed, which, on a fresh vent having been opened below for the egress of the lava, has broken, and, intermingling with the more liquid masses, has been heaved and tossed about in every direction, and now exhibits the wildest and most fantastic figures, which the imagination may easily convert into various objects of nature and art.

This molten stream\* is one of those which issued from

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\* Few, perhaps, would suppose, that any traces of lava are to be found in the Bible ; yet, among the numerous interesting phenomena of nature described in the more ancient documents of that invaluable book, we not only

Leirhnukr and Krabla, two famous volcanic mountains in the vicinity, between the years 1724 and 1730, and inundated almost the whole of the plain along the northern and eastern shores of the lake Myvatn. A little to the left, you descry it descending down the front of an adjoining mountain apparently not more than forty yards in

meet with this substance, but, if I mistake not, volcanic mountains, and hot springs, such as exist in great abundance in Iceland. The prophet Nahum declares, in his sublime description of the majesty of God, that “the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence:—his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” Chap. i. 5, 6. And Jeremiah evidently takes his image from a volcano, when he saith, “Behold I am against thee, O *destroying mountain*, saith the Lord, which *destroyest* all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a *burnt mountain*. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, but thou shalt be *desolate* for ever, saith the Lord.” Chap. li. 25, 26. The passage which contains the most unequivocal reference to an eruption of lava, is that in which Eliphaz insidiously reminds Job of the catastrophe which unexpectedly seized the abandoned inhabitants of the cities of the plain :

“Hast thou observed the ancient tract,  
That was trodden by wicked mortals ?  
Who were arrested of a sudden,  
Whose foundation is a *molten flood* ;  
Who said to God : Depart from us.  
What can Shaddai do to us ?”

“Though he had filled their houses with wealth,  
(Far from me be the counsel of the wicked !)  
The righteous beheld and rejoiced,  
The innocent laughed them to scorn ;  
Surely their substance was carried away,  
And their riches devoured by fire.”

Chap. xxii. 15—20.

It is, indeed, commonly believed, that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was effected by a shower of fire and brimstone miraculously produced in the regions of the air, and Gen. xix. 24, has been adduced in support of the opinion. But the words : “The Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord, out of heaven,” are susceptible of a very different interpretation. It is well known that, in Scripture, every operation of nature is directly ascribed to God. All her diversified instruments are his servants, and what is performed by them is said to be done by himself.

“The winds are his messengers ;  
His servants, flames of fire.”

Earthquakes, storms, inundations, drought, famine, pestilence and war, are uniformly represented as coming from the Ruler of the universe. When, therefore, the combustible matter in question is declared to proceed from Jehovah, we are, in like manner, to understand the historian as referring the awful catastrophe imminently to God as the avenger of iniquity ; though, in bringing it about, he might, as in other instances, have availed himself of natural causes. From the geologic notices contained in the Bible, relative to the neighborhood of the devoted cities, it would appear, that it abounded

breadth; but, on reaching the low ground, it spreads at once on both sides, encircles the intervening hillocks, winds its way round every small projection of the mountains, and stretches forward to the very margin of the lake. According to the accounts given by those who witnessed the eruption, the stone-flood, as they very em-

with inflammable substances, and, as will presently be shown, was most probably at some earlier period subjected to volcanic revolutions. Nothing farther, then, was necessary, than to set on fire the bitumen, sulphur, &c. that was in the bowels of the earth, which, raging with violent fury, an earthquake ensued, and vent being given to the subterraneous elements, a torrent of melted matter was poured forth, that, descending into the plain, carried destruction to its inhabitants, cities, villages, fields, and whatever came in its way. The quantities of sulphur, pumice, and ashes, poured by the volcano to an immense height in the air, and falling from that elevation, might, with strict propriety, be said to have been "rained from heaven." In allusion to this catastrophe, God is said to rain on the wicked, hot ashes, fire, and brimstone, Psalm xi. 6. Mr. Holm, in his account of the eruption of the Skaptá volcano, says: "The whole atmosphere was filled with sand, dust, and brimstone, so thick as to occasion a continual darkness. The pumice which fell on the villages, being *red hot*, did considerable damage. Along with the pumice stones, there fell a great quantity of a dirty substance like *pitch*, rolled up sometimes in the form of small balls, and sometimes like rings or garlands. The falling of these *hot substances* was attended with great mischief, as they totally destroyed all manner of vegetation that they came near."

That, besides the fiery sulphureous shower described by Moses, an inundation of lava overtook those cities, is stated in the most express terms, in the passage quoted from Job. Their inhabitants were *arrested* by its torrents. It surrounded their habitations, and cut off all way of escape, *carried before it* their substance, *devoured* their riches with its raging *flames*, and so completely laid waste the spot where they dwelt, that nothing now remained but a *stream of melted matter*.

In confirmation of the conflagration of the ground about Sodom and Gomorrah, may be alleged Deut. xxix. 22. "All the land *burning* with brimstone and salt; *like the overthrow* of Sodom and Gomorrah," &c. Nor was the fire thus kindled extinguished for ages, but continued to send forth flames, smoke, bitumen, &c. Strabo, lib. xvi. Philo de vita Moses, lib. ii. Joseph. de Bello Jud. lib. iv. c. 8.

Previous to this terrible revolution, the valley abounded with bitumen-pits, Genesis xiv. 10, out of which great quantities of that substance were dug; being applied, by the ancients, in the construction of edifices, Genesis xi. 3, floating vessels, &c. Exodus i. 14. Now, what could possibly be more remarkable than the bitumen, except some volcanic craters, or hot fountains, resembling those in Iceland, by which water, bitumen, sulphur, &c. were continually ejected? On the supposition, that volcanoes, or boiling pools, did exist in the neighborhood of the valley, a more appropriate name could not have been found, within the whole compass of the Hebrew language, than the valley of Siddim or Sheddim, the name actually given to it in the xivth of Genesis. The appellation signifies, "The valley of the pourers forth;" or, taking in both senses, "The pourers forth of destruction." Let any one read the history of a volcanic eruption, and then say whether these be not the ideas most forcibly impressed upon his mind.

But I have said that the word may designate hot springs, or fountains, as well as volcanoes. It is, in fact, the same in signification with the Icelandic

phatically called it, ran slowly along, carrying every thing before it, and burning with a blue flame, like that which proceeds from sulphur, yet but partially visible, owing to the dense smoke in which it was every where enveloped. During the night the whole region appeared to be one blaze; the atmosphere itself seemed to be on fire, and was filled with large balls of fire: flashes of lightning darted along the horizon, and announced to the inhabitants of distant districts the terrific scenes exhibited in this quarter. Having overflowed the greater part of the low lands, the lava was at length poured into the lake, which it filled to a considerable distance, forming numerous little islands, and destroying the fish with which it was stocked. Those who inhabited the plain, being apprised of the approaching disaster, by the rumbling and cracking noise from the mountain, removed the most valuable of their effects to situations where they were secure from danger.

On my arrival at Reykiahlid, one of the farm-houses

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*Geysers*, "The gushers, pourers forth;" and it is certainly a most striking coincidence, that a little to the north-west of Krabla, there is a valley called *Geysadal*, in other words, "The valley of Siddim!"

Supposing some such phenomena, for it is now impossible to determine which, to have given rise to the name of the valley, it will be no difficult matter to explain what were the idolatrous objects of worship, which caught the attention of the Israelites on coming into those parts, and to which they offered their children in sacrifice, Deut. xxxii. 17; and Psalm cvi. 37. They were either some ancient volcanoes, or the effects of such, visible in the ejaculations of hot water, or bitumen, from large boiling caldrons, which excited the fears and terrors of those who lived in the neighborhood, and at last became an important branch of Canaanitish idolatry. To appease these offended deities, the terrified votaries sacrificed the offspring of their own bodies, thereby hoping to live secure in future from such dreadful havoc and devastation, as they had seen hurled from the mountains in the vicinity of Sodom. It was universally the custom among the northern nations, when they had unfruitful seasons, to sacrifice some person of consequence, in order to procure a good year: their kings themselves were frequently the victims on these occasions. Now, if such was the case, merely on a common failure of the seasons, how much more natural was it, when that failure was effected by a volcano? Within the whole range of the visible creation, there is undoubtedly nothing more terrible in its appearance, and more dreadful in its effects, than a volcanic eruption,—nothing more calculated to inspire the mind with sentiments of horrisic awe, or excite the ignorant to perform acts of superstitious worship and adoration. Witness the effect produced on the inhabitants of Naples, during an eruption of Vesuvius. The head of St. Januarius is carried in procession by the Cardinal Archbishop, and placed directly in front of the mountain, amidst thousands of superstitious and trembling spectators. If such a custom has obtained among people called Christians, we may surely conclude, that ignorant idolatry, at a remote period of the world, would go still further, and worship the object of terror.

overrun by the fiery stream, but which was afterwards rebuilt nearly on the same spot, my attention was instantly directed to the church, which, in almost a miraculous manner, escaped the general conflagration. Reaching the north-west corner of the low earthen wall by which the church-yard is enclosed, the lava has been arrested in its progress within about two feet of the wall, where, as if inspired with reverence for the consecrated ground, it has divided into two streams, and, pursuing its course till it advanced about twenty yards, when the streams have again united, left the church completely unhurt in the midst of the surrounding flames. Some parts of the stream, close to the wall, are more than double the height of the church.

From this place a prospect presents itself, which, perhaps, of all the views in the world, bears the most striking resemblance to that in the vicinity of the Dead Sea.\* The Myvatn, or Gnat Lake, so called, from its being frequented by immense swarms of that troublesome insect, lies directly before you ; and the whole of the intervening tract, which may be about a mile in breadth, is one vast field of black, rugged, and cavernous lava, now projecting a considerable way into the lake, and now giving place to the water : thus forming innumerable creeks and promontories along the greater part of the northern margin. To the north-west rise a number of barren hills that open into the sandy deserts ; leaving which, the eye wanders over an extensive tract of moor, intersected, at different distances, by red conical mountains ; till, reaching the south

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\* Strabo, in his Geograph. lib. xvi. speaking of the Dead Sea, says, "It is full of asphaltus, which, at irregular periods, boils up out of the deep, like the ebullitions of hot water, and, assuming a curvated appearance, looks like little hills, emitting a quantity of hot embers, from which an illusive vapor proceeds," &c.—"For there is also a fountain of fire in the middle, producing abundance of bitumen, the irregularity of whose ejections is to be ascribed to the motion of fire, which, like many other substances, observes an order invisible to us. That there exists fire in this region, is evinced by many other signs ; by the rugged calcined rocks around Moasada, hollow caverns in many places, slags, pitch distilling from the rocks and hot rivers, the unpleasant smell of which is perceptible at a distance."—In like manner Philo de vita Moses, lib. ii. :—"The memory of that inexpressible disaster (the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah) is still shown in Syria : ruins, ashes, brimstone, smoke, and thin flames, still breaking forth, intermingled as it were with fire." The barrenness of the surrounding soil became proverbial ; and, according to the unanimous testimony of oriental travellers, it wears, to this day, the most sterile and melancholy appearance.

side of the lake, it falls in with several huge dark mountains, of various singular forms, that are again relieved in the east by the Nâmar, or sulphur mountains, from the decomposition going forward in which, a vast profusion of smoke is constantly ascending to a great height in the atmosphere. The most profound and death-like silence pervades the whole of this desolated region. The dismal gloom reflected by the darkness of the opposite mountains on the lake is greatly augmented by the small black islands of lava with which it is studded ; and the pillars of vapor proceeding in different places from the surface of the water, though affording a slight contrast, only tend to finish the melancholy scene, by leading the mind to the destructive element, still raging at no great depth in the earth, which has been the tremendous cause of the surrounding wildness and ruin. The lake, which is reckoned to be about forty miles in circumference, has been so filled up with the torrents of lava which have been emptied into it, that, at its extreme depth, it does not exceed four fathoms and an half, and, in most places, is only between two and three fathoms deep. In the lava with which the bottom is covered, are numerous rents and cavities ; and, what is remarkable, there are hot fountains in the middle of the lake, boiling to such a degree, that the steam rising from them is seen at a considerable distance. The immediate vicinity of these fountains proves an excellent nursery for the *forelles*, which are found here in great abundance, and much fatter than common. The islands, which have been formed by the heavings and explosion of the sub-aquatic lava, are upwards of thirty in number. Some of them yield a little hay and pasture ; and most of them abound in angelica, a plant of which the natives are very fond, and which they collect for winter provision. It has a pleasant taste when fresh, but is said to be still better after it has been kept some time.

Having pitched my tent close to the margin of the lava, I retired to read a little ; but had not proceeded far in that exercise, when my servant announced the arrival of a large travelling cavalcade from the east country ; which, on coming out, I found belonged to Kammer-assessor Thorlacius, who had been several years Sysselman of South Mûle district, but had lately received the Syssel-

manship of Arness district, and was now removing his family to the south. It is impossible for a foreigner, who has never been in Iceland, to form any idea of the trouble and danger connected with such a removal. The conveyance of the more important parts of household furniture is entirely out of the question: for they cannot be got overland, and there are no coasting vessels; and it is with the utmost difficulty that the most portable articles can be removed. The fording of the rivers, the climbing of the mountains, the scrabbling over the lava, the passage of the morasses, bad weather, and numberless other circumstances, present very serious inconveniences even to the most robust and accustomed traveller, and might be deemed absolutely insurmountable barriers in the way of females and young children; yet Mrs. Thorlacius, with her three children, had undertaken a journey of not less than five hundred British miles, and seemed to support it with a courage that quite astonished me. They had each a horse, except the youngest, a girl of about two years, who rode before an assistant.

The morning of the 19th being clear and serene, I resolved to proceed into the desert; and, sending my servant on before me with the baggage, I got my guide to strike off a little to the right, in order to conduct me through the mines. Encountering a cavernous tract of ancient and recent lavas, intermixed and tossed about in the wildest manner, my curiosity was excited by a singular looking hill, about half a mile before me, from the top and sides of which a considerable quantity of smoke was making its escape, and which wore every appearance of a volcano in miniature. On coming up to it, I found it to consist of lava and volcanic sand. In the middle was a circular crater, of about twenty feet in diameter; which, being open on the south side, I entered, and surveyed various rents in the scorified wall, which emitted so much heat and smoke, that I could scarcely approach within a yard of them. The bottom was filled with sand and rough slags, and the whole bore the most evident marks of its having been a furnace in which the fire has raged, and from which it has played on the surrounding regions. From this place I rode, in a north-east direction, encompassed on every hand by smoking rents and chasms in

the lava, till I came to the Vapor-bath, a low rude building of lava, raised over an excavation, in which is a crevice that sends forth a current of steam, and heats the place to such a degree, that, on closing the door, a person is instantly thrown into the strongest perspiration. Close to the crevice, Fahrenheit's thermometer rose, in the course of two minutes, to the 144th degree. The bath is frequented by people from a distance, and is celebrated for its efficacy in curing various diseases. It is, however, very inconvenient to bathe here, owing to the quantity of small sooty volcanic sand, which is not only thrown around the bath, but has even penetrated into the inside, through the pieces of lava of which it is constructed.

The sulphureous exhalations now becoming so strong, and the deceitfulness of the surface so great, we were obliged to alight from our horses, and lead them over such parts of the soil as appeared most indurated, though, after we had used every precaution in selecting the road, it frequently happened that one of the horses' feet broke through the crust, and left a hole, which continued to send forth smoke in great abundance, so that every moment we were in danger of sinking into .

—————“a fiery deluge, fed  
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed!”

On either side lay vast beds of sulphur, covered with a thin crust, containing innumerable small holes, through which the vapor was making its escape. In many parts the crust, which presented the most beautiful aluminous efflorescence, was not more than half an inch in thickness; and, on its being removed, a thick bed of pure sulphur appeared, through which the steam issued with a hissing noise. The sublimation of the sulphur is produced by the constant ascension of this vapor; and it is found to possess greater and less degrees of purity, in proportion as the soil is more or less porous. In general, however, these mines are vastly superior to any other in Iceland, owing to the intense degree of subterraneous heat, and the very loose and porous nature of the earth at this place.

The sulphur mountain rises to a considerable height from the east side of the hollow in which these mines are situated. It does not exceed a mile in breadth, but is more

than five miles in length. The surface is very uneven, consisting of immense banks of red bolus and sulphur, the crust of which is variegated with random mixtures of yellow, light blue, and white colors ; and, in some places, a soft sandstone makes its appearance through the predominant mould. I could also observe holes, out of which the sulphur has been dug by the peasants, and which seemed to have been made with much prodigality : a consequence that must ever attend its being dug without any regular plan, by persons who do not possess skill sufficient to qualify them for the work. Instead of the mines being wrought under the inspection of an individual appointed for the purpose, the mode of collecting the sulphur is left entirely to the discretion of the peasants ; who, in the earlier part of the summer, collect such quantities of it as will afford them a barter against the articles of foreign produce, which they may need for the winter.

Ascending by the sides of the banks, the bolus of which was very soft, and often took the horses more than mid-leg deep, we succeeded in gaining a narrow pass in the mountain, which opened into a vast level country, but terminated all at once in so abrupt and precipitous a descent, as to excite a momentary trepidation and awe. Yet I had scarcely recovered from my consternation, when a more terrific scene opened on my view. Almost directly below the brink on which I stood, at the depth of more than six hundred feet, lay a row of large caldrons of boiling mud, twelve in number, which were in full and constant action ; roaring, splashing, and sending forth immense columns of dense vapor, that, rising and spreading in the atmosphere, in a great measure intercepted the rays of the sun, which stood high above the horizon in the same direction. The boldest strokes of poetic fiction would be utterly inadequate to a literal description of the awful realities of this place ; nor can any ideas, formed by the strongest human imagination, reach half the grandeur, or the terrors, of the prospect. I stood for about a quarter of an hour as if I had been petrified, with my eyes intensely fixed on the dreadful operations that were going on in the abyss below me, when, turning to the left, I had a full view of the tremendous Krabla, the Obsidian Mountain, and two or three other volcanic mountains, whose names I could not learn with any certainty.

Leading our horses down the side of the mountain, in a zig-zag direction, we advanced towards the *hverar*; but, as the steeds grew rather restive, and the soil began to lose its firmness, we left them behind us, and proceeded, with wary step, amongst numerous burning quagmires. Excepting two, which lie at the distance of twenty yards from the rest, they are all crowded together into one vast chasm of the lava. Some of them remain stationary within the crevice, but roar terribly, and emit much steam; others boil violently, and splash their black muddy contents round the orifice of the pit; while two or three jet, at intervals, to the height of four or five feet. The most remarkable, however, is that at the northern extremity of the chasin. Its smallest diameter, down at the surface of the puddle, may be about fourteen feet, but it opens gradually to the edge, where the chasm is at least twenty feet across. The water, which was quite turbid and black, was comparatively quiet about two minutes, when it broke forth in a most furious manner, jetting to the height of between ten and fifteen feet, and splashing between the jets, in oblique directions, on every side, which rendered it dangerous to stand near the margin. What increased the danger, was the softness of the soil, which appeared to fill other chasms close to the great one, so that, on making a sudden leap, to escape being scalded, a person can hardly avoid plunging into semi-liquid beds of hot clay and sulphur, an alternative still more shocking. The jetting is accompanied with a harsh roar, and the escape of a vast quantity of vapor strongly impregnated with sulphur. It lasts four minutes, after which the liquid again subsides to its former state. The two apertures, that lay at a short distance from the rest; were filled with thick mud, which moved so sluggishly that it could scarcely be said to boil, but, as the surface was considerable, it puffed no small quantity of steam in a very amusing manner. To a considerable distance around these springs, and a long way up the mountain, the soil is extremely soft, and so hot, that you cannot hold your hand more than three inches below the surface.

Having again reached our horses, we were on the eve of setting off for the road, when, happening to turn towards Krabla, I descried a vast volume of smoke, rising at

first perpendicularly, with amazing velocity, from a break, about two-thirds up the south-west side of the mountain ; but, after gaining a considerable elevation, it struck off in a beautiful horizontal line towards the north-west ; and as its regular intermission indicated that it proceeded from a boiling volcano, and I had yet the greatest part of the day before me, I resolved to ascend the mountain, and survey another of these terrible, but interesting scenes. It was with difficulty, however, that I could prevail on my guide to accompany me. The region, he said, was wholly unexplored ; and hidden pools of boiling clay were scattered so thick around the foot of the mountain, as to render it inaccessible ; but, on offering to make him a trifling present, his fears began to leave him, and he at length engaged to conduct me as far as we could proceed with safety.

The path we pursued, lay along the eastern margin of a stream of lava, which is, for the most part, covered with white pumice and volcanic sand. The side of a low mountain, to the right, which we skirted for some time, was partially overgrown with grass, and now and then a few willows reared their dwarfy tops above the ridges of the lava. Passing a desolate farm, and keeping at a distance from the sulphur banks, which appeared in the face of a contiguous mountain, we succeeded in reaching the base of Krabla, without meeting with any of the pools so much dreaded by my guide ; but here an obstacle presented itself, scarcely less formidable. Along the foot of the mountain ran a small rivulet, by which the ground had been hollowed out to a great depth ; and, as there was nothing on either side but loose clay, it was some time before we could find a place, sufficiently indurated, to afford a solid footing for our horses. What increased the difficulty was, that the opposite bank, which is formed by the base of the mountain, was so high and steep, that at almost every step the surface gave way, and we slid down again into the stream. After several reiterated attempts, we at length gained the summit of the bank, and proceeded upwards, but found the ascent very laborious and toilsome ; the side of the mountain consisting of pumice, sand, and soft earth, and for the most part steep and slippery. Walking and riding by turns, in a curvi-

lineal direction, we left several divisions behind us; and, from the apparent nearness of the smoke, and the loudness of the roaring which attended it, both being perceptible at intervals, we flattered ourselves with the hope that the *hver* lay behind the height immediately above us; but on reaching it, we found still another eminence to climb; till having been tantalized in this manner for near an hour, and almost completely out of breath, we ultimately came within sight of the object of attraction. As such, I certainly viewed it at a distance, when nothing was visible but the body of vapour; but the moment my eye took in the whole of the scene, I became conscious of sensations the most repulsive and abhorrent. At the bottom of a deep gulley, lay a circular pool of black liquid matter, at least three hundred feet in circumference, from the middle of which a vast column of the same black liquid was erupted, with a loud thundering noise; but being enveloped in smoke, till within about three feet of the surface of the pool, I could not form any idea of the height to which it rose.

From every circumstance connected with the vast hollow in which the pool is situated, I could not but regard it as the remains of the crater; which, after having vomited immense quantities of volcanic matter, has loosened the adjacent parts of the mountain to such a degree, that they have fallen in, and left nothing but the boiling caldron to mark its site, and perpetuate, in faint adumbrations, the awful terrors of the scene. The surface of the pool may be about seven hundred feet below what appeared to be the highest peak of Krabla, and about two hundred feet below the opposite height on which I stood.

Having continued some minutes to disgorge its muddy contents, the violent fury of the spring evidently began to abate; and, as the ground along the west side of the hollow seemed sufficiently solid, I got the guide to accompany me to the immediate precincts of the pool. On the northern margin rose a bank, consisting of red bolus and sulphur, from which, as the wind blew from the same quarter, we had a fine view of the whole. Nearly about the centre of the pool, is the aperture whence the vast body of water, sulphur, and bluish black bolus is thrown



JETTING POOL IN THE CRATER OF KRABLA.

*Pennell's Litho., Boston*



up, and which is equal in diameter to the column of water ejected by the Great Geyser at its strongest eruptions. The height of the jets varied greatly; rising, on the first propulsions of the liquid, to about twelve feet, and continuing to ascend, as it were, by leaps, till they gained the highest point of elevation, which was upwards of thirty feet, when they again abated much more rapidly than they rose, and after the spouting had ceased, the situation of the aperture was rendered visible only by a gentle ebullition, which distinguished it from the general surface of the pool. During my stay, which was upwards of an hour, the eruptions took place every five minutes, and lasted about two minutes and a half. I was always apprised of the approach of an eruption by a small jetter that broke forth from the same pool, a little to the east of the great one, and was evidently connected with it, as there was a continual bubbling in a direct line between them. None of its jets exceeded twelve feet, and generally they were about five. Another bubbling channel ran a little way to the north-west of the principal opening, but did not terminate in a jetter like the former. While the eruption continued, a number of fine silver waves were thrown round to the sides of the pool, which was lined with a dark blue bolus, left there on the subsidence of the waves. At the foot of the bank on which we stood, were numerous small holes, whence a quantity of steam was unremittingly making its escape with a loud hissing noise; and on the west side of the pool was a gentle declivity, where the water ran out, and was conveyed through a long winding gulley to the foot of the mountain. The soil around the margin was so extremely soft, that it was not without imminent danger I endeavored to thrust my thermometer into the liquid, in order to ascertain the degree of its heat; an attempt which proved fruitless, as the glass got obscured by the sulphureous exhalations.

The above is an outline of the situation and general appearance of this wonderful pool, but its horrors are absolutely indescribable. To be conceived, they must be seen; and, for my part, I am convinced, that the awful impression they left upon my mind, no length of time will ever be able to erase. Surely, were it possible for those thoughtless and insensible beings, whose minds seem

impervious to every finer feeling, to be suddenly transported to this burning region, and placed within view of the tremendous operations of the vomiting pool, the sight could not but arouse them from their lethargic stupor, and, by superinducing habits of serious reflection, might be attended with the happiest consequences, both to themselves, and all within the sphere of their influence.\*

On again reaching the elevation where we had left our horses, I stopped a few minutes to survey the surrounding scenery. The view from this place was very commanding, but desolate and dreary in the extreme. What was visible of Krabla, appeared covered with the same clay, pumice, and sand, as that on which I stood; only diversified by beds of yellow sulphur, and a few strangely misshapen rocks, which now and then broke through the surface. On the left rose the Obsidian mountain, consisting of a high narrow ridge, that runs from north to south. This was relieved by a low flat circular mountain, over which I could descry part of the vast inhospitable desert stretching into the interior, till terminated by the huge volcano called Herdubreid, and the Odâda Hraun, which is reported to be one of the most extensive and forbidding tracts of melted rock that is to be met with in Iceland. To the west of this wilderness lay a number of low mountains. Directly in front was the valley filled with lava above described; near the farther end of which the large columns of smoke, ascending from the sulphur

\* Olafsen and Povelsen, describing two pools on the south-east side of Krabla, say, that they are called *Vute*, a contraction of *Helvute*, which signifies "hell;" and the name is most probably a remnant of "ancient superstition."—"We only reached one of the apertures, which we could discover at a distance, from the dense black smoke arising from it. In appearance, it resembles an exceedingly large kettle. The rim was about five fathoms high above the water, which is bluish, and thick as porridge; and the fine clay, which is thrown up on the banks by the steam, is sour. It is only at certain intervals, when the smoke is carried away by the wind, that a person can look down into the pit. The whole region completely answers to the well-known Solfatara in Italy, of which the inhabitants entertain the same unlovely idea the people here have had, that it is either purgatory or hell. The heathens gave the appellation of *Ollam Vulcani* (Vulcan's pot) to the boiling lake at the same place," pp. 726, 727. That my guide was not altogether free from such apprehensions was evident; for, while the thundering operations of the pool were going on, his attitude, and the contortions of his features, were scarcely less terrific than the pool itself. I was the more struck at this, as he seemed to regard the scenes we had witnessed in the morning with perfect indifference.

springs, had a fine effect. Beyond this rose the mountains to the south of Myvatn. To the west lay the dangerous volcano of Leirhnukr. It appeared considerably below me, at the distance of a mile. The crater was surrounded by a vast tract of black lava, which is said to be inaccessible, owing to the softness of the ground ; and the side of the mountain that lay nearest to me was covered with beds of bolus and sulphur.

Quitting this scene, we came, in the course of an hour, to the Obsidian mountain, so called from its abounding in obsidian or the Icelandic agate. On the west side of this mountain is a large hollow or plain, in which are a number of knolls, for the most part pointed at the summit, that consist entirely of this beautiful mineral. From the undulations apparent in the space between these eminences, I concluded that it has been overrun by a stream of obsidian, and that the knolls have been heaved up in a manner analogous to that in which those of common lavas are formed. I ascended one of the knolls, which, being broken on one of the sides, exhibited the most perfectly black obsidian. With the utmost ease I separated pieces from the rock much larger than I could possibly move. Having picked out such specimens as were most conveniently carried, and just glanced at the large shining beds near the top of the mountain, I again mounted my horse, and made the best of my way to a pass at the northern extremity, through which I hoped to extricate myself from these dismal volcanic regions. Just before coming to the pass, we rode close by a large pool of light blue water, where, it would appear, from the depositions round the margin, a boiling spring has played in former times.

The descent from the pass was extremely declivitous, and could only be accomplished by leading the horses in a zig-zag direction. Having reached the foot of the mountain, we hastened to quench our thirst at a black stream, which we saw a little way before us, and which proved exceedingly refreshing, both to ourselves and the horses ; neither of us having tasted a drop since early in the morning. All around the tract we explored, the water is of a light blue colour, and so strongly impregnated with sulphur that it cannot be drunk. We now rode across a

number of stony fields, and in the course of an hour arrived at the road, which led us in the next hour to a vast plain, overrun with lava at some remote period, and exhibiting, in many places, immense yawning caverns; in others, a surface of many hundred feet square, as level as pavement. This tract was relieved by one consisting of cinders and ashes, which have proceeded from a volcano a little to the right hand of the road. This volcano is of no great height, stands insulated, is circular, and hollow within, having a lateral opening towards the east; and, from its resemblance to an old fortification, and its having been used for driving horses into, in order to catch them, it has obtained the name of *Hrossa-borg* (horse-fort). In this situation, to whatever side the traveller turns, nothing presents itself to his view, but

“A dreary plain, forlorn and wild,  
The seat of desolation.”

After leaving these awful scenes, we had to cross the Yokul river, one of the largest and most dangerous in the north of Iceland. This we effected in safety, but with no little difficulty and danger, as well as delay. When we reached the opposite bank, it had become so dark, that we could scarcely see to reload the horses; and yet we had six miles of a desert country to explore alone, the guide from Reykiahlid quitting us at this place. At first we could discover the track from the greater darkness of the sand, but we had not advanced two miles ere it became wholly invisible; and, after alighting from our horses, and feeling in vain with our hands, we were obliged to commit ourselves to God, and the instinct of one of our horses, as His instrument, during the remainder of the way. I had often heard of surprising feats being accomplished by the Icelandic horses; yet they had more the appearance of the tales of other years than that of sober facts. In my present circumstances, an opportunity presented itself of bringing them to the test of experience. Suffering the steeds to go loose, and placing the oldest first, we were conducted, without a single accident, over heights and hollows, till, all at once, we were stopped in our progress by a steep elevation, the nature of which, with all our groping, we could not possibly ascertain. At last, after crossing and recrossing it several

times, my servant explained the mystery, by exclaiming, “ Ho ! here is a window !”\* so that, after having rode four miles across an unknown desert, in a night of extreme darkness, we had the great satisfaction to find we had arrived at Grimstad, the appointed limit of our journey for that day.

As it was past twelve o’clock, the family were sunk in the most profound sleep ; yet, on being called up, they arose with the greatest alacrity ; and I had scarcely got time to hang up a lamp they had the kindness to lend me, when the landlady and one of her daughters made their appearance in the tent, with a large basin of hot milk, bidding me repeatedly welcome, and tenderly sympathising with me in my perplexities and troubles. With heartfelt gratitude I prostrated myself before the God of my life ; praised him for the numberless mercies of the day ; and, commanding myself, during the remainder of my journey, to his blessing, I laid myself down to rest, in a happier state of mind than I recollect having done for years.

My tent and baggage having been completely soaked with the rain, and the horses tired with the fatigues of the preceding evening, I resolved to spend the following day at this place. On the clearing away of the mist, an extensive view of the surrounding country presented itself ; but, with the exception of some small huts and grass-lands belonging to the farm, the eye wandered in vain in search of houses, or the least appearance of vegetation. The whole formed one vast desert, the gloomy uniformity of which was barely relieved by some snow and ice mountains, and a number of fantastically shaped volcanoes, that crowded into the scene, in almost every direction. Of these, the most remarkable was Herdubreid, or the Broad-Shouldered Volcano, so called from the shape of the crater, which is distinctly visible from this place. This mountain forms the meridian day-mark of the Grimstad family. Few of the Icelanders being in possession

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\* On relating this anecdote to one of the most respectable public officers in Reykiavik, he informed me, that one dark night he was in like manner puzzled by a height that fell in his way ; but applying the whip to his horse, he obliged him to mount it, and did not discover his situation till one of the fore-feet of the animal sunk into a hole, which, on dismounting, he found to be the chimney of a house !

of watches, the only sun-dial they make use of is the natural horizon, which they divide into eight equal points, called day-marks, availing themselves of certain peaks or projections of the mountains ; or, in the absence of these, they erect pyramids of stones on the corresponding heights. Most of these kinds of pyramids have originally been raised by the first settlers from Norway, and have been held in repair from generation to generation ; which circumstance will account for the difference of time between the Icelandic computation, and that in common use with us. Their divisions are as follows :

1.	Midnight,	.	.	.	about 11 o'clock,	P. M.
2.	Morning Vigil,	:	.	— 2 —	A. M.	
3.	Mid-morning,			{	— 5 —	—
	or					
	Shepherd's rising hour,			}		
4.	Day,	.	.	— 8 —	—	—
5.	High-day, or Noon,	:	.	— 11 —	—	—
6.	Nona,	.	.	— 2 —	—	P. M.
7.	Mid-evening,	:	.	— 5 —	—	—
8.	Night,	.	.	— 8 —	—	—

But to return to Grimstad. The family, fifteen in number, were all busy at haymaking, close to my tent. I could not help admiring the cheerfulness and content which shone in every countenance ; and I was more than ever convinced of the truth, that happiness is confined to no station, and that the fewer our real wants are, the greater is our enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the long train of cares and anxieties which harass and perplex the votaries of artificial luxury. Uncontaminated by intercourse with polished life, the inhabitants of this obscure farm preserve all the original simplicity of natural habits ; and, ignorant of the cunning and deceit, the perfidy and intrigue, which too often pervade more populous societies, they are unsuspecting, liberal, and kind, in the highest degree. They live at the distance of thirty miles from any neighboring habitation ; so that they are strangers to the petty feuds and quarrels of vicinage ; and, mustering so strong a force at home, they stand in no need of foreign assistance. Their principal earthly care is the safety and provision of their flocks and herds, on which both their clothing and food depends, as well as the barter of the summer market. To no situation, therefore, could

the sage advice of Solomon more aptly apply : “ Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds ; for riches are not forever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation. The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of thy field. And thou shalt have goats’ milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens.” Proverbs xxvii. 23—27. Their distance from any place of worship is so great, that they can only attend twice in the year, in order to receive the sacrament ; and even then they do not repair to the parish church, but to a house of prayer, situated at a considerable distance in the desert, where two other solitary families meet with the clergyman for the above-mentioned purpose. They, nevertheless, discover a superior degree of religious information, which is to be ascribed to their being in possession of a copy of the Scriptures, and a number of other good books, which they read every Sabbath in summer, and during a considerable portion of the long evenings in winter.

In the course of my evening walk I fell in with the crowded pen, in which were two girls, employed in milking the sheep. Observing that they were upwards of fifty in number, and that such as had been milked were soon lost among those that were unmilked, I asked how it was possible for them to distinguish the sheep with so much ease ? “ O,” said they, “ we know them all by name ;” a reply which at once brought to my recollection, and illustrated that endearing part of the character of the Lord Jesus, “ that Great Shepherd of the sheep ;”—“ and he calleth his own sheep by name.” John x. 3.

Leaving Grimstad about ten o’clock in the forenoon of the 21st, we soon lost sight of vegetation, and again encountered a desert of stones and sand.

The day being hot, we were parched with thirst ; but it was not till we had been repeatedly deceived by the appearance of vallies and brooks, that, about five o’clock in the afternoon, we came to a small river, where, as there was a little vegetation on its eastern bank, we stopped about half an hour to refresh the horses. Resuming our course, we came, in a short time, to a precipitous descent,

which extricated us from the wildness of bleak and desolate mountains, and introduced us into a level country, where there was a good deal of coarse grass, and being studded, in various places, with sheep, it presented a very agreeable relief to the eye.

About one o'clock the next day, we arrived at Hof, the residence of the very Reverend A. Thorsteinson, Dean of North Mule Syssel. The Dean is a tall, well-looking man, of about forty, easy and polite in his manners, and possesses a degree of intelligence and piety greatly superior to any I had yet met with on the island. Having read the letters of introduction which I delivered to him, he expressed, in the liveliest terms, the interest he felt in the circulation of the Sacred Oracles; his joy at the provision that had been made for Iceland; and his gratitude to God, whose kind providence had paved the way for the bestowment of this blessing upon her. Several years ago he had received, for distribution, two hundred copies of the New Testament, published in 1807, but they only went a little way in supplying the want; and he verily believed that, in the course of a few months, he could dispose of as many thousand copies in his Deanery. The desire of reading the Scriptures, he was happy to say, was universal; but hitherto the means of gratifying it were very circumscribed, owing to the scarcity of Bibles in this quarter of the island. The parish of Hof contains upwards of four hundred souls; yet there is only one parishioner, upwards of eight years of age, that cannot read, and this individual is prevented by a natural infirmity.

The longer I was in company with the Dean, and the wider scope we gave to the conversation, the more did we coalesce; and, like the disciples of old, "our hearts burned within us," while we talked of the wisdom and goodness displayed in the plan of the divine government; the love of the Son of God, in voluntarily becoming our substitute; the claims he has on our love and obedience, in consequence of that substitution; the excellency of his Gospel, and the pleasing prospects of the extension of his moral dominion, which are at present opened to the view of the church. Prevented, by his situation, from obtaining any information relative to the state of religion in

other parts of the world, the accounts I had it in my power to communicate, were as “ cold waters to a thirsty soul.” The establishment of Bible Societies, in particular, he could not but regard with a kind of reverence, mingled with the most joyful admiration. In the course of the evening, we fixed the mode of supply for the northern division of Mule Syssel ; the Dean engaging to institute an immediate inquiry relative to the number of the poor, whose circumstances required that copies be given them gratis ; as also, how many wish to purchase copies, either of the Bible or New Testament ; and, on completing the investigation, to write to Copenhagen, by one of the autumn ships, for the quantity needed within his charge. His lady also, together with her sister, a widow, discovered superior intellectual attainments, and read with avidity the Danish account of the operations of the Bible Society, which I had given to the Dean.

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## CHAP. V.

Journey through Mulè Syssels—Bridge and Basket—Punishment for neglect of Education—Eskiford—Holmar—Magnificent Prospect—Beautiful Basaltic Pillars—Ice Mountains of Myrar and Heinaberg—Basalts—Description of Breidamark Yökul, or Moving Ice-Field—Hypothesis respecting its formation, and change of position—Dangerous Yöku! River—Oræfa Yökul and Volcano—Volcanic Eruption of 1727 described—Skaftafell—Moving Ice Mountain of Skeidera—Passage of the Skeidera.

ON the 23d of August, about noon, I bade adieu to the kind and interesting family at Hof, and set off on the road to Eskiford, across the Hofsâ and Sunnudalsâ, two considerable rivers, which are, for the most part, supplied from the snow-mountains, and join a little below this place. Having skirted the south bank of the Sunnudalsâ for some time, the path turned off to the left, and brought us to a very steep and winding ascent, on the east side of the Fossâ, or Cataract River. We were here obliged to dismount, and lead our horses up the mountain. As we ascended, I was every moment charmed with the finest cascades, down which a great quantity of water was poured with resistless fury; and, what tended to heighten their grandeur, was the immense depth at which they lay; the pools by which the most of them were received being upwards of a hundred feet below the brink of the gully along which we passed. In many places the road approached so close to the margin, that there was great danger of the horses missing a foot, and sliding into the abyss.

I reached the Yökulsâ-â-Brû, another of those mighty rivers which this island pours into the ocean, on the morning of the 24th. When the reader is informed that, previous to its reaching this place, it receives an accession of

no less than thirty-eight rivers and streamlets, he will be able to form some idea of its size and strength. It is here confined between two perpendicular precipices of solid rock, measuring fifty-two feet across, and sixty-eight from the brink of the rocks to the bottom. The depth of the water is various, depending on the rains and the melting of the snow; and sometimes its banks are entirely overflowed, as in 1625, when the water rose forty feet above them. At the time I passed, there appeared to be about thirty feet to the surface of the water. Over this channel, a slender wooden bridge is thrown, about five feet in breadth, with ledges, consisting of a few poles which are raised from the beans on either side, and bound together at five different places above, which gives them the appearance of as many doors. Alighting from my horse, I went to the bridge, and after having looked for a minute or two into the profound chasm, through which the light brown torrent rolled and boiled with the most tremendous fury, I took hold of the ledges, and shook the bridge with the utmost ease. Indeed, its instability is such, that I have no manner of doubt but a person of powerful muscle could shake the whole structure to pieces in less than a quarter of an hour. I now walked over, not without impressions of terror, and returning, led my horse over the tottering frame; when my servant and one of the peasant's sons carried over the baggage, and then led the horses one by one, till all was safe on the opposite side.

Some miles farther up, there is another mode of crossing this river, but it is still more terrific. Two ropes are suspended from the edge of the precipice on either side, on which a basket or wooden box is hung, sufficiently large to contain a man and an ordinary horse-burthen. Into this box the traveller must descend, and pull himself, by means of a rope, over the yawning abyss; while, owing to the looseness of the main ropes, the box sinks with rapidity till it reaches the middle, and threatens by the sudden stop it there makes, to dislodge its contents into the flood. The principal danger, however, attends the passage of the horses. They are driven into the river a little higher up, and if they do not swim to a certain point formed by a projection of the rock, they are precipitated over a dreadful cataract, and seen no more.

About five in the afternoon, we arrived at the northern margin of the Lagarfliot, which was covered with fragments of zeolites, crystals, and other minerals; the water itself was white, and being little short of a mile in breadth, had more the appearance of a lake than a river.

The whole of the tract on both sides of the Lagarfliot is closely inhabited, and is considered to be one of the best districts in Iceland. It contains ten parishes. The pasturage is uncommonly rich, the meadows extensive, the mountains abound in lichen *Islandicus*, which the inhabitants collect during the summer, and lay up in store for winter provisions; and the numerous forests of birch that grow here, yield them many conveniences, of which other districts are entirely destitute. Add to which, the fine fishery on the Lagarfliot, as well as the ease with which they can row out to the salt-water fishery, and it will appear, that the praises which have been lavished upon it, have not been altogether without foundation.

The 25th, being rainy, I was confined the most of the day to my tent. At first I indulged the hope of being able to turn my detention to some advantage, by mixing with the family, and obtaining a closer view of the native manners and customs; but, to my no small disappointment, I soon found, that the character they exhibited was in perfect contrast with any I had hitherto observed in Iceland, and that if I were to form a judgment of its inhabitants in general, from the specimen I now had before me, the sentence I should pronounce upon them would not be more unfavorable than unjust. Sloth, swearing, and slander, appeared to be their predominant habits. Happening to mention these circumstances afterwards to a person who knew the family, he sincerely regretted that I should have fallen into such bad hands; confirmed me in the opinion I had formed of them; and communicated the following additional information. About four months ago their conduct had become so intolerable, that it was found necessary to summon them before the Sysselman's court; when, on investigation, it appeared that the wickedness of the children had not only prompted them to compose infamous satirical songs, on the priest, and almost every person in the parish, but had assisted others in the composition of similar songs on their own parents. They were

sentenced to be beaten with rods at home by the constable of the parish, and to stand public penance in the church, as a warning to the congregation. Nor were the parents allowed to pass with impunity. The bad conduct of the children was in a great measure to be ascribed to a neglected education, and the influence of evil example on their part; they were accordingly sentenced to pay a heavy fine.

The next day, after a rough ride of two or three hours, I arrived at Eskifjord, where I was kindly received by the Sysselman, Mr. Vidalin, who is brother to the Bishop, and has perhaps travelled more than any other Icelander of modern times, having made several voyages to the East Indies and other distant parts. He not only surrendered to me his room and bed, but pressed me to mention any thing I wanted, as all he had was at my service. On entering his room, I was happy to recognise a large quantity of Bibles and New Testaments which I had sent to this place. These he had unpacked, and arranged in the best order, but had not ventured to dispose of any till my arrival. I soon explained my plan to him; and I had the pleasure, before leaving the place, to witness the commencement of their distribution. The people had no sooner heard of their arrival, than they manifested, as in other places, the utmost desire of obtaining copies.

The following morning, I set off for Holmar church, accompanied by the Sysselman and one of the factors. We arrived just as the service was going to commence. The subject of discourse was, "Christ's life on earth, a life of benevolence and usefulness." From the clergyman, Sira Guttorm Paulson, I met with the most cordial reception, and the rest of the day was spent in conversation about the interpretation of Scripture, the state of the Icelandic translations, and the wants of the people in a religious point of view. Sira G. has spent some time at the university of Copenhagen, and possesses a superior acquaintance with the Greek language. In him the Bible cause has a warm friend; and much may be expected from his active exertions in the sphere in which he is placed.

Owing to the interesting conversation and distinguished hospitality of Sira Guttorm, I found it impossible to leave

Holmar before noon on the 29th. Indeed, it was with deep regret that I had it not in my power to spend longer time at the different places where I halted, but the advanced state of the season required the utmost possible expedition. Having conducted me to the end of the Reydar bay, and given my servant proper directions respecting the road, Sira G. bade me an affectionate adieu, when I pursued my course over the mountains and along the coasts.

The next eight days were devoted to the journey from Holmar to Stasafell ; and being detained for a day or two by the rain, it was not till the 5th of September that I crossed the Yökulsâ and pitched my tent at the foot of the mountains in which it has its rise. Early the next morning, I entered the mountain pass, on reaching the extremity of which, a prospect burst upon my view, the most novel, magnificent, and unbounded that I ever beheld. At my feet lay a stupendous precipice, whose base is washed by the sea, and which is certainly not less than nine hundred feet of nearly perpendicular height. The ocean, bounded only by the distant horizon, expanded towards the left. The Hornafliot appeared on the right ; the eastern margin of which is beautifully ornamented with farms ; beyond which, as far as the eye could sweep, nothing was seen but one vast chain of Yökuls, or ice-mountains, stretching back into the deserts in the interior, and terminating towards the west in the majestic Oræfa-Yökul, the highest mountain on the island. The sparkling rays of the meridian sun, reflected from the marble snow with which the upper regions of the Yökuls are covered, the vivid green crust which forms their base, and the blue waves of the ocean, had a most exhilarating effect ; and the whole of the scenery was calculated to produce in the mind the noblest and most sublime emotions.

Having stopped some time in order to contemplate the sublimity of this spectacle, I approached the east side of the pass, and proceeded down a very precipitous descent, the bottom of which I reached with extreme difficulty, as every step I took set the fragments of the rock in motion, and it required the utmost agility to avoid being rolled along with them into the hollow. The traveller is also

here exposed to immense disruptions from the face of a rugged mountain, which overhangs the descent at the height of at least eleven hundred feet. Several of these had fallen apparently only a few days before I passed, and, not having been cleared away from the road, considerably impeded my progress. The mountains in this quarter wear a whitish appearance, and consist for the most part of thin slate stone, and a porous kind of basalt, the beds of which are distinguishable, in various places, by the regularity of their perpendicular columns.

For the last three miles before I pitched my tent, the road lay through immense masses of variously situated columnar rocks, some of which appeared to have been thrown down from the adjoining mountains, and others were standing in their original beds. At one place especially, I almost fancied myself amid the ruins of some of the noblest structures of ancient Grecian architecture. The pillars were piled one above another with the most perfect exactness, and arranged so as to form an entire semicircle. They stand quite perpendicular; some of the divisions may be about four feet in length, but in general they appeared to be from two to three feet. The most of them were six-sided; a considerable number had five, and some seven sides. Finding that such fragments as had been thrown down were mostly all concave at the one end, and convex at the other, I was anxious to ascertain their original position, and climbed up amongst the broken pillars, when I discovered that they were all concave at the upper end; and the excavation appeared to be more or less hollowed according to the convexity of the lower end of the joint that had stood upon it.

As I stood and admired the regularity and perfection of this natural colonnade, and the exactness with which the angles of the pillars were formed, my servant alighted from his horse, and, coming up to me, declared that the place was visibly the work of art, but that it was too stupendous to be the effect of human art. Such vast natural structures the natives call "Giant's Wall;" the cavities found in ranges of smaller basalt are termed "Chambers of the Dwarfs;" which proves, that, like the unenlightened of other countries, they have been accustomed to view such uncommon appearances as the production of

certain intelligences superior to man. What cause have we to bless God for the light of science ! While it annihilates the imaginary beings of superstitious invention, it introduces us into the more secret recesses of the great cabinet of nature, and presents us with ever fresh discoveries of the wisdom, the power, and the greatness of her divine Creator. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! In wisdom hast thou made them all : the earth is full of thy riches. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Psalm civ. 24. exi. 2.

On approaching a farm near this place, I found it surrounded by a natural fortification of basaltine pillars, which I had to skirt for some time, till reaching a lower part of the circular range, which serves for a gate, I ultimately succeeded in gaining admittance. The people showed a kind and obliging disposition, and seemed wonderfully pleased with a copy of the New Testament which I gave them, there not being any in the vicinity.

As the weather continued fine the following day, I advanced as far as Reinavellir, which lies at the eastern termination of Breidamark-Yökul, and about thirty-six miles from my former station. The first part of the road lay across alternate tracts of bogs and sand, at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the margin of the Myrar and Heinaberg Yökuls, which are only branches of the immense Klofa Yökul, a central chain of snow and ice mountains in the interior, connecting the numerous Yökuls that project towards the eastern coast of Iceland, and occupying a space of not less than three thousand square miles. In regard to form, they are considerably high and narrow behind where they leave the main mass, but run forward, sloping and spreading as they advance, till they reach the plain, which they line to the distance of ten or twelve miles, presenting a margin of from twenty to fifty feet high. Their curvated appearance, and their inclination round the barren peaks which they embosom, suggest the idea of a vast fluid body having moved forward into the plain, and congealed in the attitude they now present. In the upper regions, they appear to consist of the purest virgin snow ; about the middle, they become blackish, owing, I suppose, to the admixture of sand and dust from

the adjacent mountains; and a considerable way around the edge they assume a beautiful green tint, which, reflecting the beams of the sun, produces the most brilliant effect.

Besides several inferior streams, these Yökuls pour into the ocean three large rivers. The whole of this plain has formerly been well inhabited, but has been so dreadfully inundated by floods from the Yökuls, that only one farm now remains, which, at some distance, you would suppose actually situated in the midst of the ice.

Turning the end of a strangely rugged mountain, consisting, for the most part, of tuffa, in which were numerous holes of an immense size, presenting the atmosphere above, a most beautiful group of small basaltic pillars caught my eye, at the height of about seven hundred feet, in the face of an adjoining mountain. They had the appearance of so many bars of iron, bundled together at the top, but bulging out about the middle, from which, to the foot, they assumed a perfectly perpendicular position. The fragments that were scattered along the base of the mountain, were mostly heptagonal. Beyond this, I obtained, at times, a distant view of the Yökul, till, passing several mountains diversified in shape, but all horizontally stratified, the valleys between which are tolerably well inhabited, I arrived at the plain before Kálfafell, when I was surprised by the prospect of a magnificent glacier, called Kálfafells-Yökul, which all at once falls with a rapid descent into the valley, and appears almost completely green. It would hardly be supposed that any vegetation could thrive in the vicinity of such a spot, yet the sides of the valley, close to the ice, seem uncommonly fertile, and yield pasture to a more numerous herd of cattle than I had seen any where in Iceland.

The 8th of September I shall ever recollect with feelings of the deepest interest, and the most lively gratitude to God for his merciful preservation. Having prevailed on the peasant of Reinavellir to conduct me over the Yökulsá à Breidamerkur-sand, a river which I had been taught, by Captain Scheel, to regard as the most formidable and dangerous of all the rivers in Iceland, I proceeded towards the sand, which I gained, after fording a pretty broad river, called the Vedurá. Its banks are lined with

pieces of turf, and large fragments of trees, which it carries down from the interior of the Yökul.

The position and origin of this Yökul are quite peculiar. It is not so much a mountain, as an immense field of ice, about twenty miles in length, fifteen in breadth, and rising, at its greatest elevation, to the height of about four hundred feet above the level of the sand. The whole of the space it occupies has originally been a beautiful and fertile plain, which continued to be inhabited for several centuries after the occupation of the island ; but was desolated in the dire catastrophe that happened in the fourteenth century, when not fewer than six volcanoes were in action at the same time, and poured inconceivable destruction to the distance of near a hundred miles along the coast. While the snow-mountains, in the interior, have been discharging their waters through this level tract, vast masses of ice must have been carried down by the floods, some of which, being arrested in their progress, have settled on the plain, and obstructing the pieces which followed, they have gradually accumulated, till, at last, the fresh masses that were carried to either side by the current, have reached the adjacent mountains, and the water, not having any other passage, has forced its way through the chasms in the ice, and formed channels, which, with more or less variation, it may have filled to the present period.

This theory of the formation of the Breidamark Yökul, will, in my opinion, not only account for its singular situation, but also explain its progressive motion, and other remarkable phenomena connected with this species of ice-mountains. Of its progress towards the sea, I was furnished with the amplest proof on passing along the margin. About the distance of a quarter of a mile from the south-east corner of the Yökul, I was surprised to find it traversing the track made in the sand by those who had travelled this way the preceding year ; and, before reaching the point, I again discovered a track, which had been made only eight days previous to my arrival, lost and swallowed up in the ice. The same fact is confirmed by a comparison of the present length of the river, with what it was about fifty years ago. Olafsen and Povelsen, describing it as the shortest river in Iceland, state it to have

been about five miles from its egress to its junction with the sea at the time they passed it; whereas it does not now appear to exceed one mile in length. Now, going back to its foundation, we shall suppose the Yökul did not originally occupy more than a quarter of a mile in breadth; or that this was the extreme thickness of the barrier, consisting of fragments of ice, by which the melted snow from the mountains was obstructed in its course. Deranging the original constitution of the masses of ice, the water must alternately have flowed, and been dammed up, now perforating into this cavern, and now into that, while, gaining fresh strength from the quantity accumulated behind, it has at last carried the greater part of the ice-wall before it to some distance, and again left it to settle, as soon as it got vent into the plain. The depositions of ice, &c. would soon fill up the space that had been left; and new obstacles being presented to the river, by the falling in of the chasms and vaulted passages through which it flowed, successive revolutions of the same kind would ensue. The force of the water rushing into new caverns, the vent given to the imprisoned air, and the expansive power of the frost, accumulated in a degree proportionate to a body of such magnitude, must all have combined to elevate and convulse the Yökul; while the snow and ice it has been collecting for the space of four hundred years, will sufficiently account for its present size and form. What corroborates this hypothesis is the fact, that it is only in summer it advances, after a strong thaw on the snow-mountains; at which time, also, the river which it discharges, is poured forth, now at one place, and now at another. On such occasions, the natives say, "There is a run in the river;" and generally view it as unfordable; on account of the rapidity of the current, and the large masses of ice which it hurls from the bowels of the Yökul down to the sea. If this field of ice be not entirely carried away by some awful convulsion in the mountains behind it, the progress it is making will soon bring it to the sea; and, in the course of a few years, all communication between the southern and eastern districts by this route will be cut off.

All along the margin, and a considerable way back, were deep indentations, and, in some places, chasms of

an immense size, that penetrated farther than the eye could reach, and in which I could hear the distant dashing of the water as it fell from the surface of the Yökul. The margin consisted, for the most part, of large flat pieces of ice lying in all directions : sometimes it was as perpendicular as a wall ; at others, the ice lay horizontally, forming vast crystal grottoes ; and what particularly struck me, was a number of small cavities and cells, in such parts of the surface of the ice as were not exposed to the sun, which were filled with the most beautiful pyramidal crystals, from a quarter of an inch, to an inch and a half in diameter. In some places, the interior of the grottoes was completely studded with these crystal groups, sparkling with a dazzling lustre, and assuming various hues, according as they were more or less exposed to the light.

Where the Yökul has pushed forward in one direction, and again receded, large heaps of clay, sand, and turf, are thrown up, so as to form a catenation of small hills round its base ; but where its progress is continuing, no such hills are seen ; only furrows are laid open in the sand, by the sharp projecting pieces of ice, and the sand is raised, precisely as the ground by a plough, to either side. In some places, I could plainly observe the motion of the sand ; but whether it arose from the actual progress of the Yökul, or merely from the dissolution of the ice, I shall not determine. Before getting within lee of the margin of the Yökul, I was keenly sensible of the extremes of heat and cold ; a sharp piercing wind blowing from the Yökul on the one side, while the scorching rays of the sun beat on the other. On reaching the ice, the cold entirely ceased, and I was thrown into a violent perspiration, though sitting at ease on my horse.

About one o'clock, we arrived at the usual channel of the river, which lay at least ten feet below the general surface of the sand ; and were surprised to find that, as far as we could see, there was not the least appearance of water. The guide was the more alarmed at this, as, how much soever the river had shifted its course each summer, it was always distinctly visible from this spot ; and only eight days before, when a Danish gentleman passed this way, it had flowed in the channel before us. Having

descended into this channel, and proceeded to some distance, the guide averred, that the river had entirely disappeared ; and, looking at me, told me, seriously, he believed I was endowed with a superior degree of good fortune to any other traveller that had ever passed this way. Urging him to proceed with me a little farther, till we should learn the certainty of the matter, we had not rode a quarter of a mile, ere we were convinced, by its tumultuous roar, and the height of its breakers, that the river not only existed, but was as impetuous and dangerous as ever. The nearer we approached it, the more formidable it appeared ; and I certainly would not have had the courage to attempt fording it, had it not been for the confidence inspired by the following lines of the Hebrew bard :

“ Jehovah ! the floods lift up,  
“ The floods lift up their voice ;  
“ The floods lift up their waves.

“ Than the voice of many waters,  
“ Mightier than the breakers of the sea,  
“ Mighty on high is Jehovah ! ” Psalm xciii. 3, 4.

Crossing several inferior branches, we gained a sandbank, past which the principal stream was rolled ; but the current was so impetuous, and the huge shoals of ice that were hurled along seemed so difficult to be avoided, that our guide deemed it more advisable to attempt the passage of the Yökul itself, directly above the egress of the river. Though rarely practicable by horses, it is seldom the Yökul may not be crossed on foot ; and it is only in this way that sheep can be conveyed to the opposite side. Leaving his horse, therefore, he climbed up among the cavities and walls of ice, in order to look for a passage ; but the fissures and chasms were so tremendous, that he was obliged to desist from the perilous attempt. The source of the river was only two stone-casts from us, whence the water boiled and raved to a most furious degree, now rising and now subsiding, yet constantly carrying out with it immense fragments of ice, which it swept along to the sea.

On the return of our guide, we rode a little farther down, and as there was no other alternative, we entered the stream ; the guide going first with his long pole, in order to probe the bottom, my servant and the baggage

horses following after, while I myself brought up the rear. Having got so deep that the water had no longer a free passage between our horses' legs, it rose like a wave against their sides, and the current being strong and rapid, threatened to sweep us all before it. As the guide's horse was not strong, he was very nearly borne down ; the baggage-horses were also swung round, and my own, though possessing more strength than any of them, when he found the current getting too strong for him, threw himself against the stream side, and almost precipitated me into the flood. Owing to the suddenness with which he assumed this position, I was apprehensive that the stream had carried his feet out from below him ; but I soon found it was a natural instinct in the animal, prompting him to recline with all his weight against the impetuosity of the water ; and, balancing myself as well as I could, I sat in great suspense till he brought me to the opposite bank. Nor did our dangers terminate here. We had still several branches to ford, scarcely less furious than that we had crossed ; and I had not gained one of the banks two minutes, when a huge piece of ice, at least thirty feet square, was carried past me with resistless force. The foaming of the flood, the crashing of the stones hurled against one another at the bottom, and the masses of ice which, arrested in their course by some large stones, caused the water to dash over them with fury, produced altogether an effect on the mind never to be obliterated.

Having reached the opposite side of the river in safety, we all took off our hats, and returned thanks to the God of our lives for his kind care and protecting mercy, of which he had afforded us so signal an experience on this occasion.

From the egress of the river, Breidamark Yökul stretches in a north-west direction, till it is relieved by the Oræfa Yökul, the lower division of which is spread over the low mountains that line the coast, and is quite green, while the upper regions, consisting of the purest snow, tower to the height of 6240 feet in the horizon.\*

\* As Oræfa Yökul is the highest mountain in Iceland, it is presumed the following description of its ascent from Mr. Paulson's MS. will not be uninteresting to the reader.

" We left Qviskér, (a small solitary farm at the eastern base of the moun-

Between the two Yökuls, a narrow black mountain rears its peaked summits, and though engulfed in eternal snows, its sides and gullies are clothed with verdure, and the neighboring cottagers drive their sheep over the ice to feed there during the summer. In our progress across the sand we were met by several other considerable rivers, but none of them occasioned us any difficulty.

tain,) a quarter before six in the morning of the 11th of August, 1794, with a clear atmosphere and calm weather, after having furnished ourselves with a barometer, a thermometer, a small compass, a pointed hammer, a long pole, and a rope about ten fathoms in length. Our route lay up the precipitous mountains, which form the base of the Yökul, till we gained the ice at a quarter before nine o'clock. The barometer had now fallen from  $28^{\circ} 4\frac{1}{4}'$ , where it stood at Qviskér, to  $25^{\circ} 4\frac{1}{2}'$ , and the heat was  $8\frac{1}{2}$ ° of Reaumur. The margin of the Yokul had evidently pushed forward against the height on which we stood, and raised a wall of small stones and sand nearly half up its side, but had again retreated to the distance of several fathoms.

"Having bound myself to my two companions by means of the rope, leaving a distance of two fathoms between each, that we might assist each other, in case any of us should happen to fall into a rent of the ice, we proceeded up the Yökul, but had scarcely advanced twenty paces, when we heard a noise louder than thunder, running as it were longitudinally through the whole ice mountain from S. to N. accompanied with a perceptible concussion under our feet, which lasted for about a minute. My companions now wished to return, but though this shock retarded our progress a few moments, a kind of a natural impulse to visit these icy Alps prompted me to continue my ascent; and we afterwards found, that the report was occasioned by what is called a Yökul-burst, the ice having disrupted and fallen in from either side of a gulley, about five English miles in length. We continued our route up the south-east side of the Yökul where it was least acclivitous, passing a number of black tuffa rocks, and crossing a multiplicity of fissures deeper than the eye could reach. Here, as is common at such elevations, the atmosphere got too thin to admit of our breathing with freedom. One of our party was so much affected, and felt such an inclination to sleep, that he remained-behind us, and on lying down on the bare ice, immediately fell asleep; the other, naturally subject to a beating at the heart and melancholy, found himself more relieved and cheerful the higher we ascended, without being sensible of any particular fatigue from the tenuity of the air. We at length gained the south-east peak of the Yökul at a quarter before twelve o'clock, and found, that, in conjunction with the three or four other peaks to the west and north, it describes the side of an immensely large crater of a circular form. These peaks on the summit of the Yökul are so precipitous, that the mass of ice has in different places disengaged itself, and fallen down from them, leaving a number of black calcined rocks, the tops of which are covered with hats of frozen snow, and for the most part inaccessible, as a single false step would inevitably precipitate the traveller into the unfathomable chasms at their base. The barometer fell here to  $22^{\circ} 6''$ , or  $5^{\circ} 10\frac{1}{4}''$ , from what it was at Qviskér. The thermometer, at the same height with our eye from the surface of the Yökul, stood at  $11\frac{1}{4}$ ° of Reaumur. The atmosphere was clear, and the wind blew keenly from the north. We could not discover any irregularity of the compass, and the whole of its variation was two points towards the west.

"We again reached Qviskér, much fatigued, about half past four o'clock in the afternoon."

We now entered a tract the most doleful and haggard that can possibly be conceived. It consists of the ruins of a range of mountains that had been convulsed to their very foundations in the year 1362, when the Yökul burst with a dreadful explosion, and completely devastated the coast in the vicinity. All around us lay immense masses of tuffa or hardened clay, filled with innumerable small black stones, which, upborne by the violence of subterraneous heat, have been whirled down in this direction, and lodged in the wildest confusion along the foot of the Yökul. Towards the heart of the mountain stretched a gloomy gulley, terminated by rugged shapeless rocks, round which, in every direction, lay masses of hoary ice, connecting with the Yökul behind, and mixing in every possible form with the ancient erupted matter of the volcano.

About eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at Hnap-pavellir, so called from the Yökul that beetles over it at a great height, in which there is a large round black spot, like a knap or button, forming a striking contrast to the whiteness of the snow. It consists of two farms, which are situated close together; and, as I pitched my tent between them, the inhabitants seemed to dispute with each other to whom the right of hospitality ought to belong, bringing me large dishes of excellent cream, and, what I had not before observed in the east country, begging I would excuse them if I did not find it so *polished* as I might wish. The prospect of obtaining copies of the Bible gave them great joy; for there were none in the vicinity, and some of them had not so much as ever seen the precious volume. Scanty and precarious, therefore, as the pittance is which nature affords them, the famine they labor under is not so much a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, as a famine of the words of the Lord.

Before leaving this station, I was furnished with a new proof of the disinterestedness of Icelandic hospitality. As my horses now began to get very fatigued from the length and nature of the journey, it became necessary for me to have them exchanged; and mentioning the circumstance to one of the peasants, he instantly trucked a strong fresh horse against one of my lean ones, without so much as expecting a single shilling to the bargain. This the

natives regard as a duty they are indispensably bound to discharge towards travellers who may stand in need of their assistance in this way.

Skirting the foot of the Yökuls, we arrived about eleven o'clock at a farm called Hof, where, as my servant wished to transact some business with the peasant, I stopped for more than two hours. A little to the north of this, I was shown a high, white, and conic-shaped mountain, on the summit of which is an altar, consisting of a large square stone, somewhat hollowed in the middle, where human sacrifices were presented in the days of heathenism. The place is called Goda-borg. All the mountains in the vicinity are very precipitous; overhang the farms that are situated at their base; and besides having been subjected to the destructive effects of subsequent eruptions, appear evidently to be of volcanic formation. The farmer, who is known over the whole island by the name of "David of the wilderness," is remarkable on account of his enthusiastic fondness for ancient Scandinavian literature, and retains, perhaps, more of the habits and dispositions of his forefathers than any of his countrymen at the present day. He possesses upwards of a hundred sagas in MS. most of which he has by heart; and confirms almost every assertion by a long quotation of ancient authorities. He has also collected a vast number of more recent poems and rhymes, and is himself a rhymer.

Having exchanged another horse at this place, we set out on the road to Skaftafell, and were accompanied by David, who undertook to guide us across the tract that was laid waste by an exundation from the western division of the Yökul, in the year 1727. As no authentic account of this dreadful exundation of the Oræfa volcano has, as far as I know, ever been published in England, I will here insert part of a letter, addressed by Sira Jon Thorlakson, at that time minister of Sandfel, to Secretary Olavius.

"In the year 1727, on the 7th of August, after the commencement of divine service in the church of Sandfel, as I stood before the altar, I was sensible of a gentle concussion under my feet, which I did not mind at first; but, during the delivery of the sermon, the rocking continued to increase so as to alarm the whole congregation; yet they remarked that the like had often happened before.

One of them, a very aged man, repaired to a spring, a little below the house, where he prostrated himself on the ground, and was laughed at by the rest for his pains ; but on his return, I asked him what it was he wished to ascertain ? to which he replied, " Be on your guard, Sir ; the earth is on fire !" Turning at the same moment, towards the church door, it appeared to me, and all who were present, as if the house contracted and drew itself together. I now left the church, necessarily ruminating on what the old man had said ; and as I came opposite to Mount Flaga, and looked up towards its summit, it appeared alternately to expand and be heaved up, and fall again to its former state. Nor was I mistaken in this, as the event showed ; for on the morning of the 8th, we not only felt frequent and violent earthquakes, but also heard dreadful reports, in no respect inferior to thunder. Every thing that was standing in the houses was thrown down by these shocks, and there was every reason to apprehend, that mountains as well as houses would be overturned in the catastrophe. What most augmented the terror of the people was, that nobody could divine in what place the disaster would originate, or where it would end.

" After nine o'clock, three particularly loud reports were heard, which were almost instantaneously followed by several eruptions of water that gushed out, the last of which was the greatest, and completely carried away the horses and other animals that it overtook in its course. When these exundations were over, the ice-mountain itself ran down into the plain, just like melted metal poured out of a crucible ; and, on settling, filled it to such a height, that I could not discover more of the well known mountain Lomagnupr, than about the size of a bird. The water now rushed down the east side without intermission, and totally destroyed what little of the pasture-grounds remained. I removed my family up to the top of a high rock, on the side of a mountain, where I caused a tent to be pitched, and all the church utensils, together with our food, clothes, and other things that were most necessary, to be conveyed thither ; drawing the conclusion, that should the eruption break forth at some other place, this height would escape the longest, if it were the will of

God, to whom we committed ourselves, and remained there.

"Things now assumed quite a different appearance. The Yökul itself exploded, and precipitated masses of ice, many of which were hurled out to the sea ; but the thickest remained on the plain, at a short distance from the foot of the mountain. The noise and reports continuing, the atmosphere was so completely filled with fire and ashes, that day could scarcely be distinguished from night, by reason of the darkness which followed, and which was barely rendered visible by the light of the fire that had broken through five or six cracks in the mountain. In this manner the parish of Oræfa was tormented for three days together : yet it is not easy to describe the disaster as it was in reality ; for the surface of the ground was entirely covered with pumice-sand, and it was impossible to go out in the open air with safety, on account of the red hot stones that fell from the atmosphere. Any who did venture out, had to cover their heads with buckets, and such other wooden utensils as could afford them some protection.

"On the 11th it cleared up a little in the neighborhood ; but the ice-mountain still continued to send forth smoke and flames. The same day I rode, in company with three others, to see how matters stood with the parsonage, as it was most exposed ; but we could only proceed with the utmost danger, as there was no other way except between the ice-mountain and the Yökul, which had been precipitated into the plain, where the water was so hot that the horses almost got unmanageable ; and, just as we entertained the hope of getting through by this passage, I happened to look behind me, when I descried a fresh deluge of hot water directly above me, which, had it reached us, must inevitably have swept us before it. Contriving, of a sudden, to get on the ice, I called to my companions to make the utmost expedition in following me ; and, by this means, we reached Sandfell in safety.

"The mountain continued to burn night and day, from the 8th of August, as already mentioned, till the beginning of summer, in the month of April the following year, at which time the stones were still so hot, that they could not be touched ; and it did not cease to emit smoke

till near the end of summer. Some of them had been completely calcined ; some were black and full of holes ; and others were so loose in their contexture, that one could blow through them. On the first day of summer, 1728, I went in company with a person of quality to examine the cracks in the mountain, the most of which were so large that we could creep into them. I found here a quantity of saltpetre, and could have collected it, but did not choose to stay long in the excessive heat. At one place, a heavy calcined stone lay across a large aperture ; and as it rested on a small basis, we easily dislodged it into the chasm, but could not observe the least sign of its having reached the bottom. These are the more remarkable particulars that have occurred to me with respect to this mountain ; and thus God hath led me through fire and water, and brought me, through much trouble and adversity, to my eightieth year. To Him be the honor, the praise, and the glory for ever."

We left Shaftafell about noon, accompanied by the peasant, who had undertaken to guide us through the different rivers that lay in our way. On our right we had the Southern Skeiderâ Yökul, which in situation and size pretty much resembles that of Breidamark, only it is not so high. It is remarkable for the alternate progression and retrogradation to which at certain periods it is subjected. Some years it pushes forward till nearly in a line with the ancient promontory of Lomagnupr, and then moves back again to the distance of more than half a mile. In 1727, when both the Oræfa and Northern Skeiderâ volcanic Yökuls were in activity, this low Yökul began to rock, to the great danger and consternation of some people who happened to be travelling on the sand before it. According to the account they afterwards gave, it moved backwards and forwards, undulating at the same time like the waves of the sea, and spouting from its foundations innumerable rivers, which appeared and vanished again almost instantaneously, in proportion to the agitation of the Yökul. As the progress it made was inconsiderable, the spectators saved themselves on a sand-bank, but the suddenness and unexpectedness with which the rivers continued to rush forth, rendered it impossible to travel any more that way the whole summer.

On reaching the middle of the sand, we fell in with the

remains of the projection that took place in 1787, consisting of an elevation of from thirty to fifty feet, and covering an extent of several acres, the surface of which has the same appearance with the rest of the sand. At first I had no idea of its being any thing else than an immense sand bank, or a rising ground, which had withstood the violence of the floods; but, after riding more than a mile on it, I discovered that I was proceeding over masses and caverns of ancient ice; and had it not been for the intelligence and experience of our guide, I certainly would not have hazarded the prosecution of my journey in this direction. Descending into a hollow, we passed through between extensive pools of white water, and rounded several sources from which considerable rivers were poured forth into the sand. This region may be about three quarters of a mile from the present margin of the Yökul; and near the middle of the intervening space are a number of inferior heights which have been left on the regress of the Yökul in 1812, the last time it was observed to be in motion.

To explain the cause of these phenomena, recourse has been had to a subterranean communication between this Yökul and the neighboring volcanoes; but its progress may be accounted for on the same principle with that we have adopted in regard to Breidamark Yökul; and it seems equally natural to conclude, that its falling back is occasioned by the sliding down of the hinder parts of the Yökul into the low space that had been occupied by the vast collection of water previous to its having rushed into the icy caverns in the interior of the mountain, from which it has again been emptied into the plain. This supposition is confirmed by the circumstance of the retrogression happening immediately after the mountain ceases to protrude, and it has discharged itself of the immense surplus of water with which it was glutted. That it was convulsed during the eruption of the adjacent volcano was a necessary consequence of the deluge of hot water that mountain poured forth, as there was no other way for it to make its escape than the low ground occupied by the moveable Yökul; but that its movements are dependent on volcanic eruptions, is contradicted by the fact that it has both advanced and retired during the period the volcanoes have been in a state of inactivity.

## CHAP. VI.

West Skaftafell's Syssel—Skaftâr Volcano—Eruption of 1783 described—  
Sida—Hörgland Hospital—Icelandic Leprosy—Landbrot—Kötlugjâr  
Volcano—Its Eruptions described—Vik.

THE two subdivisions of Skaftafell's Syssel are separated from each other by the Gnupsvötn, and the traveller, on passing that boundary, leaves the regions of perpetual ice and snow, and enters a tract, which, though greatly defaced by the terrible convulsions of nature to which the last century was witness in this neighborhood, still exhibits ample specimens of that beauty and fertility for which it has been renowned. The Northern Skeiderâ and Skaptâr Yökuls lie at a considerable distance back from the farms; and the low flat hills which occupy the intermediate space, while they screen the inhabitants from the cold northern blasts of winter, afford their flocks and herds a pretty luxuriant pasturage. The numerous cottages that line the base of the hills, the rich vegetation which clothes nearly two-thirds of the declivity; and the beautiful basaltic pillars appearing among the cliffs above, the tops of which are met by the descending heath: all combine to render the districts of Sida and Fliotshverfi the most delightful of any in Iceland. The latter district, however, which is the most easterly, has been exposed to sad disasters since the middle of last century.

The eruption that took place in the year 1783 not only appears to have been more tremendous in its phenomena than any recorded in the modern annals of Iceland, but it was followed by a train of consequences the most direful and melancholy, some of which continue to be felt to this day. Immense floods of red hot lava were poured down from the hills with amazing velocity, and, spreading

over the low country, burnt up men, cattle, churches, houses, and every thing they attacked in their progress. Not only was all vegetation, in the immediate neighborhood of the volcano, destroyed by the ashes, brimstone, and pumice, which it emitted ; but, being borne up to an inconceivable height in the atmosphere, they were scattered over the whole island, impregnating the air with noxious vapors, intercepting the genial rays of the sun, and empoisoning whatever could satisfy the hunger or quench the thirst of man and beast. Even in some of the more distant districts, the quantity of ashes that fell was so great, that they were gathered up by handfuls. Upwards of four hundred people were instantly deprived of a home ; the fish were driven from the coasts, and the elements seemed to vie with each other which should commit the greatest depredations ; famine and pestilence stalked abroad, and cut down their victims with ruthless cruelty ; while death himself was glutted with the prey. In some houses there was scarcely a sound individual left to tend the afflicted, or any who possessed sufficient strength to inter the dead. The most miserably emaciated tottering skeletons were seen in every quarter. When the animals that had died of hunger and disease were consumed, the wretched creatures had nothing to eat but raw hides, and old pieces of leather and ropes, which they boiled and devoured with avidity. The horses ate the flesh off one another, and for want of other sustenance had recourse to turf, wood, and even excrementitious substances ; while the sheep devoured each other's wool. In a word, the accumulation of miseries, originating in the volcanic eruption, was so dreadful, that, in the short space of two years, not fewer than 9,336 human beings, 28,000 horses, 11,461 head of cattle, and 190,488 sheep perished on the island !

About a month previous to the commencement of the eruption, a submarine volcano burst forth at the distance of nearly seventy miles in a south-west direction from Cape Reykianess, and ejected such an immense quantity of pumice, that the surface of the ocean was covered with it to the distance of a hundred and fifty miles, and the spring ships considerably impeded in their course. As they approached the place, they found that a new island

had been thrown up, consisting of high cliffs, within which the fire was in violent action, and emitting smoke and pumice from two or three different places. The island was claimed by his Danish Majesty, but ere a year had elapsed, the sea resumed her ancient dominion, and the island has never been seen since.

The Skaptâr volcano, so called from the river of the same name, down which the greater part of the lava was poured, is about forty miles from the ocean. It consists of about twenty red conical hills, stretching in nearly a direct line from E. N. E. to W. S. W. which have served as so many furnaces, from which the melted matter has been discharged into the valley. From these craters the lava has flowed which inundated the low country, through the channel of the Skaptâ. What flowed down the Hverfisflot, has had its source in some other craters situated farther to the north-east, but which are evidently connected with the former hills.

The Northern Skeiderâ, Sida, and Skaptâr Yökuls, are only different designations of the same ice mountain, according to its different projections or aspects; and if it be allowable to speak of the eruptions of Oræfa in 1362 and 1727 as proceeding from the same mountain, though there be a distance of several miles between the craters, it seems still more proper to view the Yökuls just mentioned as one general volcano, whose foundations are cracked by the powerful action of subterraneous fire, which makes a passage for itself, now in this quarter, and now in that, according to the situation and quantity of the combustible matters by which it is fed, and the facility with which it reaches the surface of the earth.

From the 1st to the 8th of June, 1783, the inhabitants of West Skaftafell's Syssel were alarmed by repeated shocks of an earthquake, which, as they daily increased in violence, left no reason to doubt that some dreadful volcanic explosion was about to take place. Pitching tents in the open fields, they deserted their houses, and awaited, in awful suspense, the issue of these terrifying prognostics. On the morning of the 8th, a prodigious cloud of dense smoke darkened the atmosphere, and was observed to be continually augmented by fresh columns arising from behind the low hills, along the southern base

of which, the farms, constituting the parish of Sida, are situated. A strong south wind prevented the cloud from advancing over the farms; but the heath, or common, lying between them and the volcano, was completely covered with ashes, pumice, and brimstone. The eruption had now actually commenced; and the raging fire, as if sublimated into greater fury by the vent it had obtained, occasioned more dreadful tremefactions, accompanied by loud subterraneous reports, while the sulphureous substances that filled the air, breaking forth into flames, produced, as it were, one continued flash of lightning, with the most tremendous peals of thunder that ever were heard. The extreme degree to which the earth in the vicinity of the volcano was heated, melted an immense quantity of ice, and caused a great overflow in all the rivers originating in that quarter.

Upon the 10th, the flames first became visible. Vast fire-spouts were seen rushing up amid the volumes of smoke, and the torrent of lava that was thrown up, flowing in a south-west direction, through the valley, till it reached the river Skaptâ, when a violent contention between the two opposite elements ensued, attended with the escape of an amazing quantity of steam; but the fiery current ultimately prevailed, and, forcing itself across the channel of the river, completely dried it up in less than twenty-four hours. The cause of its desiccation soon became apparent: for the lava, having collected in the channel, which lies between high rocks, and is in many places from 400 to 600 feet in depth, and near 200 in breadth, not only filled it up to the brink, but overflowed the adjacent fields to a considerable extent; and, pursuing the course of the river with great velocity, laid waste the farms in its way. In the mean time, the thunder, lightning, and subterraneous concussions were continued, with little or no intermission; and besides the crackling of the rocks and earth, which the lava burnt in its progress, the ears of the inhabitants were stunned by the tremendous roar of the volcano, which resembled that of a large caldron in the most violent state of ebullition, or the noise of a number of massy bellows, blowing with full power into the same furnace.

On gaining the outlet, by which the hills that confine

the channel of the Skaptâ open into the plain, it might naturally have been supposed, that the burning flood would at once have deluged the low fields which lay directly before it ; but, contrary to all expectation, it was arrested for some time, by an immense unfathomed abyss in the bed of the river, into which it emptied itself with a great noise. When this chasm was filled, the lava, augmented by fresh effusions, rose to a prodigious height, and, breaking over the masses that had cooled, it at length proceeded southwards across the plain. It also rushed into the subterraneous caverns, and during its progress under ground, it threw up the crust either to the side, or to a great height in the air. In such places, as it proceeded below a thick indurated crust, where there was no vent for the steam, the surface was burst in pieces, and thrown up with the utmost violence and noise to the height of near 180 feet.

On the 18th, another dreadful ejection of liquid and red hot lava proceeded from the volcano, which now entirely covered the rocks that had towered above the reach of the former floods, during their progress through the channel of the Skaptâ, and flowed down with amazing velocity and force over the masses that were cooling, so that the one stream was literally heaped above the other. Masses of flaming rock were seen swimming in the lava. The water that had been dammed up on both sides of its course, was thrown into a violent state of ebullition.

While these awful devastations were going forward in the western divisions of the Syssel, the only inconveniences felt by the inhabitants of Fliotshverfi, were the destruction of vegetation by the showers of red hot stones and ashes which fell upon it, and the impregnation of the atmosphere and water with mephitic substances. They had, indeed, twice been enveloped in almost total darkness, especially on the 28th of June, when it was so thick, that it was scarcely possible, at noon day, to distinguish a sheet of white paper, held up at the window, from the blackness of the wall on either side ; but they fluttered themselves in the hope, that the lava would soon all be ejected, and, at all events, that it would continue to flow in the direction it had originally taken. However,

on the 3d of August, they were alarmed by a quantity of smoke, which they observed arising out of the river Hverfisflot; and, as the heat, which was also found to be in the water, daily increased, till at last the river was totally dried up, they concluded, that the same destruction was about to be poured down upon them, which had overwhelmed the parishes to the west.

Nor were their apprehensions without foundation; for the floods of lava having entirely choked up the Skaptâ, and all the low channels to the west and north of the volcano, it was forced to assume a new course, and running in a southeast direction, it was discharged at length into the Hverfisflot, which occasioned vast volumes of steam and smoke to arise from that quarter, attended with dreadful noises and lightnings. The burning flood now ran down the empty channel, and, filling it to the brink, overflowed the low grounds on both sides; and, by the evening of the 9th, it had not only reached the outlet into the open and level country, but, in the course of a few hours, had spread itself to the distance of nearly six miles across the plain. Though this branch ceased to extend over the low country after the end of August, quantities of fresh lava continued still to be thrown up out of the volcano, and a new eruption is said to have taken place so late as the month of February, 1784, during the greater part of which year columns of smoke were observed to ascend from many parts in the lava, and it had not quite cooled for nearly two years after the eruptions were over.\*

With respect to the dimensions of the lava, its utmost length from the volcano, along the channel of the Skaptâ, is about fifty miles, and its greatest breadth in the low country between twelve and fifteen miles; the Hverfisflot branch may be about forty miles in length, and seven at its utmost breadth. Its height in the level country does not exceed an hundred feet, but in some parts of the Skaptâ channel it is not less than six hundred feet high.

Such were the phenomena of this dreadful volcanic eruption. The quantity of ashes, brimstone, &c. thrown up into the atmosphere, was so great, that nearly the whole

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\* When Mr. Paulson visited this tract in the year 1794, he found a column of smoke still arising from certain parts of the lava; and some of the rents were filled with hot water.

European horizon was enveloped in obscurity. Salts-sulphureous rains fell in several countries of the north. In the Faroe Islands, the ground was at times almost entirely covered with sand, ashes, and pumice; and luminous meteors were observed in England, Holland, and other parts of the Continent. It is to these, and the tremendous earthquakes felt the same year in different parts, that Cowper alludes in the second book of his Task:

“ Fires from beneath, and meteors from above,  
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,  
Have kindled beacons in the skies; and the old  
And crazy earth has had her shaking fits  
More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.  
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props  
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,  
And nature, with a dim and sickly eye,  
To wait the close of all ?”

The contemplation of so tremendous an event is certainly calculated to produce a train of serious thought in every reflecting mind. While the skeptical speculatist pronounces it to be absolutely incompatible with the infinite wisdom and benevolence of a Supreme superintending Intelligence, the more experienced and modest naturalist, not only concludes, from the skill and fitness discoverable in the general constitution and course of things, that such apparent disorders and irregularities must be conducive to the good of the universal system, but offers very probable proofs of the beneficial tendency of volcanic eruptions, as affording a partial vent to those inflammable substances, which, however necessary as component parts of the terrestrial globe, would, if allowed to accumulate in particular places, ultimately burst forth with such inconceivable violence, that its crust would be shattered to pieces, or at least all that inhabits, beautifies, and adorns its surface, involved in one scene of undistinguishable ruin. The Christian, too, not satisfied with merely tracing the concatenation of natural causes and effects, but believing an established connection to exist between the physical and moral governments of God, is anxious to ascertain the spiritual ends these extraordinary phenomena are designed to answer, and make the improvement which they so loudly suggest. “ Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ?” Yet he is glorious in

holiness, fearful in the manifestations of his attributes, and wonderful in all his operations. At his rebuke the foundations of the world are discovered. The earth shaketh and trembleth : the foundations of heaven move and shake because of his anger.

On the 11th of September, I took my departure from Kálfafell, and proceeded on to the division of Sida. A little to the west of this place, we came to Hörgland hospital, one of the four establishments existing on the island, for the reception of incurable lepers, where I had an opportunity of contemplating that loathsome disease, so particularly described in the Levitical code, and which gave occasion to the composition of one of the most sublime pieces of Hebrew poetry that is to be met with in the sacred volume.\* Two females were at this time in the hospital, the one about thirty, and the other upwards of fifty years of age. The latter of these objects exhibited the most miserable spectacle I ever beheld. Her face and hands were swelled to a frightful degree, and full of livid red sores or botches, between which appeared scars or rents, resembling cuts in a high state of inflammation. The other seemed to be affected with a less malignant species of the same malady : for though her face was also swelled, no pustules appeared ; but the skin was covered with whitish glossy scales, and in some places intersected by reddish streaks, which are most probably a disposition to wrinkles. They were both sitting in the door of the Lazar-house, and the deepest melancholy seined depicted in their looks.

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\* It is evident, not only from the name given to the disease, but also from the complaints uttered by Job, and the general strain of the arguments used by his friends, that that pious man was afflicted with the elephantiasis, or the worst kind of Oriental leprosy. In chap. ii. 7, it is called a malignant ulceration ; and as this disease was both dreadful in its symptoms, and incurable, it was viewed by the ancients as a peculiar punishment inflicted by God on such as were guilty of some flagrant act of wickedness. Hence it was called, "The stroke of the scourge." Hence, Job's wife, viewing his recovery as impossible, bids him bless God and die. His being unable to make any farther use of his fingers, ii. 8 ; the corroded, stiff, cloddy, cracked, and loathsome state of his skin, vii. 5. xiii. 28. xvi. 8, 14. xix. 26 ; the foetidness of his breath, xvii. 1. xix. 17 ; the gloominess of his looks, xvi. 16 ; the pain in his bones, xxx. 17 ; his wearisome nights, vii. 3, 4 ; terrific dreams, ver. 14 ; his wishing for death, vi. 8—10. vii. 15, 16. x. 1 ; and his being shunned by his intimate friends and relations, xix. 13—16 ; these, and other characters which might be collected from this poem, all show that he was afflicted with the Arabian leprosy.

It is now generally agreed among physicians, that the Icelandic leprosy is the legitimate *Elephantiasis*, or *Lepra Arabum*, one of the most Herculean distempers ever employed as scourges to the human race. In its primary stages, its symptoms are inconsiderable, and very ambiguous. A small reddish spot, scarcely larger than the point of a needle, breaks out at first about the forehead, nose, corner of the eyes, and the lips ; and, in proportion as it increases, other pustules make their appearance on the breast, arms, arm-pits, &c. which generally dry up in one place and break out in another without pain, till the disease has considerably advanced, when they cover almost the whole body, give the skin a scabrous appearance, stiffen it, and terminate sometimes in shining scales, which fall off like dust, sometimes in malignant tumors and swellings. The patient, in the mean time, labors under lassitude of body, anæsthesia, and lowness of spirits. When the malady becomes inveterate, the breath, which before was disagreeable, now gets intolerably fœtid ; a strong unctuous matter is perspired ; the hair, already changed in color, falls off ; the voice grows hoarse and nasal ; and the face becomes terribly deformed. The look is wild and haggard ; the pallid red color of the body is only relieved by the most disgusting ulcers, which, becoming deeper, putrid, and virulent, not only affect the bones and joints, but, as they spread over the skin, deep ravines are formed, which give it an elephantine appearance, whence the name elephantiasis. The fingers get quite stiff and crooked, and the nails and other parts of the body fall off by degrees. During the night, the patient is harassed with terrible dreams, and he is oppressed by day with a tedious melancholy, in which he is often tempted to make away with himself. He gradually surrenders one part of his body after another to the insatiate malady ; and at length death, the long wished-for deliverer, comes suddenly and puts an end to his misery.

As the leprosy is infectious, almost every person shuns the company of the sufferer, which must greatly add to the misery of his situation ; nor can he flatter himself, after the distemper has advanced to a certain degree, with any hopes of relief from medical assistance. It is considered to be irregularly hereditary ; yet the symptoms do

not become visible before the person has reached the years of maturity. In cases of infection, too, it generally happens that three or four years elapse before any eruption breaks out in the skin. It then proceeds with slow but steady progress, and it is possible for the person who is afflicted with it, to drag out a wretched existence to the protracted term of fifty or sixty years. Very emphatically have the inhabitants of the East given this disease, among other significatory designations, the name of "The First-born of Death." The Icelandic "*Likþirâ*" is scarcely less striking. It properly signifies a rancid, putrefying corpse, than which there is nothing a person inveterately affected with the leprosy more perfectly resembles.

The origin of this dreadful malady has been traced to Egypt, where it still exists, as also in Arabia, Morocco, China, Tartary, some parts of Russia and Sweden, the sea-coasts of Norway, the West Indian and Feroe Islands, and Iceland. It was first transported by the Phœnicians into Greece : it followed the Romans on their return from Asiatic conquest ; and from the twelfth to near the end of the sixteenth century, it was the terror and scourge of Europe, into which it was introduced a second time by the Crusaders. What a mercy that we are now almost entirely freed from a disease whose victims were at one time so numerous in Europe, that every country in it was filled with hospitals for their reception !

The leprosy prevails most in the south and west quarters of Iceland, which is to be ascribed to the inhabitants of these parts being mostly employed in fishing, the rancidity of their food, their wet woollen clothes, an insalubrious air, and their not paying due attention to habits of cleanliness. The four hospitals, one in each quarter, were established in the year 1652, as appears from two royal rescripts of that date, in virtue of which, four farms belonging to the crown were appropriated to that purpose ; the supernumerary utensils and articles in the possession of the cloisters, were to be devoted to their establishment ; and a privilege was granted, authorizing collections to be made, and certain fines and taxes to be appropriated for their maintenance. Considering the number that are afflicted with this evil, these establishments do not by any means appear adequate to their relief. It is seldom they

receive more than eight lepers altogether; and, in the year 1785, not fewer than ninety-nine leprous persons were found in the diocese of Skalholt. What little funds they possessed, have been nearly annihilated by the recent depreciation of Danish currency.

At an early hour on the 12th, I proceeded into the division called the Landbrot, which is separated from Sida by the Skaptâ, whose water again flows in part in the former channel, after having sought its way through the rents and cavities of the lava. Nearly the whole of this tract consists of lava, which must have flowed long before the occupation of the island, for it is covered, in most places, with a thick soil, and overgrown with grass. From the inequalities of the surface, and the deep chasms which every now and then make their appearance, it is evidently of the more cavernous lavas; yet, surprising as it may seem, a vast number of farms and hamlets are raised on this calcined and vaulted foundation. In many parts are large apertures in the middle of the pasture grounds, where the crust has lately given way; and, viewing the situation of the houses, it is impossible not to tremble for the safety of the inhabitants, since, in all probability, many of them are separated from a watery tomb only by a porous dome, not exceeding a foot or a foot and a half in thickness.

Pursuing our course westward, the next great landmark that attracted attention was the Kötlugiâ Yökul. This mountain occupies a distinguished place among the Icelandic volcanoes. It is situated about twenty miles back from the coast. Towards the south, in which direction a number of glaciers descend from it, is a tract of about twenty square miles in extent, consisting entirely of ashes and other volcanic substances, deposited there during the eruptions, and forming one of the rudest and most forbidding scenes imaginable. As the volcano is almost entirely covered with ice, in which are large and deep fissures, it has never been fully explored; but its crater is visible at a distance, and consists of an immense gap, surrounded by black rugged rocks, which, in all probability, are nothing but lava that has been instantly cooled, on its ejection, by the superincumbent ice. From the occupation of the island to the present day, Kötlugiâ has been known to dis-

gorge flames, and either lava, or immense exundations of hot water, *eight* different times.

The first eruption, which is also the first phenomenon of this kind mentioned in the annals of Iceland, took place about the year 894 ; and its effects are still visible, in the tract of ancient lava to the east of the mountain.

Of the fifth eruption of Kötlugia, which happened 1625, the following account is given :—“ At day-break on the 2d of September, it began to thunder in the Yökul ; and, about eight o’clock, floods of water and ice were poured down upon the low country. These floods continued to be poured forth, like a raging sea, till past one o’clock in the afternoon, when they gradually diminished ; but were succeeded by terrible darkness, earthquakes, thunder, flames, and showers of sand. Nor was it in the immediate vicinity of the crater alone that the fire appeared, but down in the inhabited tract, at the distance of nearly twenty miles from the mountain, igneous vapors were seen attaching themselves to the clothes of the inhabitants. This dreadful scene continued, with little variation, till the 13th of the month. It was frequently so clear at night, that the mountains, with all their clefts and divisions, were seen as distinctly at the distance of twenty miles as they were in the clearest day. Sometimes the flames were pure as the sun : sometimes they were red ; and, at others, they discovered all the colors of the rainbow. The lightnings were visible, now in the air, and now running over the surface of the ground ; and such as witnessed them were more or less affected, in such parts of their bodies as were uncovered. These flashes were accompanied by the loudest claps of thunder, and darted backwards and forwards, now to the ground, and now into the air, dividing sometimes into separate bolts, each of which appeared to be followed by a separate report ; and after shooting in different directions, they instantly collected again, when a dreadful report was heard, and the igneous appearance fell, like a water-spout, to the ground, and became invisible. While the showers of sand lasted, it was frequently so dark in the day-time, that two individuals, holding each other by the hand, could not discover each other’s face.”

The last eruption, however, or that of 1755 and 1756, was inconceivably more dreadful than any of the preced-

ing, and was rendered the more famous by the terrible convulsions to which, at the same time, a great part of the terrestrial globe was subjected. Not only were the British isles rocked by repeated and violent shocks of an earthquake, houses thrown down, rocks split, and the waters of the sea and lakes heaved up ; but in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, and Italy, the same phenomena were experienced. Spain and Portugal, however, suffered most from the shocks. Numerous villages, convents, and churches, were demolished ; the largest mountains shaken from the foundations ; and the low grounds inundated by the swelling and overflowing of the rivers. Lisbon, in particular, exhibited a scene the most tragical and melancholy. The most ponderous edifices were heaved up and shaken ; steeples, towers, and houses, thrown down ; the ground and streets danced under the feet of the inhabitants ; and many thousands of them were buried in the ruins. Nor was the earthquake confined to Europe. It stretched over into Barbary, and destroyed upwards of a dozen cities on the coast of Africa. Its concussions were also felt in Persia, in the West Indies, and in America.\*

The inhabitants of the tract about Kötlugiâ were first apprised of the impending catastrophe on the forenoon of the 17th of October, by a number of quick and irregular tremifications, which were followed by three immense floods from the Yökul, that carried before them almost incredible quantities of ice and gravel. Masses of ice, resembling small mountains in size, pushed one another forward, and bore vast pieces of solid rock on their surface. After the rocking had continued some time, an exceeding loud report was heard, when fire and water were observed to be emitted alternately by the volcano, which appeared to vent its rage through three apertures, situated close to each other. At times the column of fire was carried to such a height, that it illuminated the whole of the surrounding atmosphere, and was seen at the distance of a hundred and eighty miles : at other times, the air was so filled with smoke and ashes, that the adjacent parishes were enveloped in total darkness. Between these

\* Stukeley's Philosophy of Earthquakes, pp. 9—30. Third Edit. Lond. 1756, 8vo.

alternations of light and obscurity, vast red-hot globes were thrown to a great height, and broken into a thousand pieces. The following night presented one of the most awful and sublime spectacles imaginable. An unremitting noise, like that produced by the discharge of heavy artillery, was heard from the volcano; a fiery column of variegated hues rose into the atmosphere; flames and sparks were scattered in every direction, and blazed in the most vivid manner.

The eruption continued, with more or less violence, till the 7th of November, during which period dreadful exundations of hot water were poured forth on the low country; and the masses of ice, clay, and solid rock, that they hurled into the sea, were so great, that it was filled to the distance of more than fifteen miles; and in some places where formerly it was forty fathoms deep, the tops of the newly deposited rocks were now seen towering above the water.

The principal damage occasioned by these eruptions consisted in the destruction of the pasture-grounds throughout the most part of the Syssel; in consequence of which, about fifty farms were laid waste, and the inhabitants reduced to circumstances of extreme distress. Numbers of cattle were carried away by the deluge; and the mephitic substances, with which every thing was impregnated, brought on a raging mortality in different parts of the country. On the breaking forth of the water, a number of people fled for refuge to an insulated mountain, where they were obliged to stay seven days, without either meat or drink, and were exposed to the showers of stones, fire, and water, which fell around them. The lightning, which was very violent during the eruption, penetrated through solid rocks, and killed two people and eleven horses, three of which were in a stable. One of the persons killed was a farmer, whom it struck dead as he left the door of his house. What is remarkable, his upper clothes, which were of wool, wore no marks of fire, but the linen he had under them was burnt; and, when he was undressed, it was found that the skin and flesh of his right side were consumed to the very bone. His maid-servant was struck with the lightning at the same time; and though her clothes were instantly changed, it continued to burn in

the pores of her body, and singed the clothes she put on. She died a few days afterwards, having in the mean time suffered inexpressible pain.

Turning the rocks, which are composed of tuffa, and present a very rugged and excavated appearance, we came to two beautiful dales which run up into the mountain, and are clothed on both sides with the richest grass. In the latter of these, the farms of Vik are situated, where the Sysselman Jon Gudmundson and the Surgeon Svend Paulson reside. They are surrounded by high ridges of mountains, which form an excellent defence against the rage of the volcano, except in front, where a noble view of the sea presents itself. At the termination of the mountain on the right, several high rocks appear in the water, which, in foggy weather, resemble a fleet of ships; and, indeed, I actually mistook them for ships at first sight. As the house of the surgeon came first in my way, I sought shelter with him from the heavy rain to which we had been exposed most part of the road. This gentleman is indisputably the first Icelander of the age with respect to natural science, especially those departments of it which more nearly concern his own island. He has travelled through the most of it, for the purpose of examining the numerous interesting phenomena with which it abounds, and has constantly kept a journal of his travels. Were this to be published, it would certainly present the world with a fuller and more accurate account of the natural history of Iceland than any we have yet received. He has also written a topographical description of the Yökuls, and other mountains of the island. One would almost suppose he had fixed his residence at this place, for the express purpose of watching the motions of Kötlugia, as he has only to repair to the summit of the mountain behind his house, in order to obtain a magnificent view of the whole region.

## CHAP. VII.

Feli—Solheimá—Yökul River—Solheimá Yökul—Caves—Steinar—Var-mahlid—Vestmanna Islands—Holtt—Markarflot—Intelligent Peasant—Oddé—Dean Jonson—Mount Heckla—Number of its Eruptions—Eyrar-backa—Desolate Mountains—Rein-deer—Reykiavik.

ON the 15th of September, I proceeded to Fell, where I was kindly received by the Dean, Sira Thord Bryniolfson. As this gentleman had only been recently invested with the office of Dean, it was not in his power to give me an exact idea of the actual state of the people within his bounds relative to the Holy Scriptures; yet he was of opinion that not many copies of the entire Bible were to be met with, but that several copies of the New Testament, published in 1807, had found their way thither. He engaged to exert himself to the utmost in ascertaining what number of copies would be wanted; to write to his clergy, requesting them to notify the arrival of the Scriptures to their congregations; and after he had learned the result, to transmit it to Reykiavik, in order to secure the requisite supply.

About ten o'clock the Dean dressed, and accompanied me to Solheimá. Excepting a small tract to the west of Fell, which consists for the most part of stones and sand, and is intersected by floods from the Yökul, the road lay over hills that were completely covered with rich grass; and as no cliffs or breaks were visible, the landscape reminded me of some familiar lawns in the Lowlands of Scotland, while the herds that were browsing on it apprised me of the wealthy circumstances of the Solheimá farmers. On our arrival at West Solheimá, where there is a church and several houses of a superior appearance, we were instantly shown by the peasant into a large room

well furnished with books, among which I was happy to observe a folio Bible ; and as his wife was from home, he set to work himself with the coffee-mill, and prepared for us an excellent dish of that expensive article of foreign luxury.

The Dean now returned, after having committed me to the care of the peasant, who undertook to guide me across the dangerous Yökul river on Solheim-sand. This river was originally only a small streamlet, but was increased to such a degree by the revolution that took place in the Yökul about the year 900, that it inundated the plain, and washed away the whole of its soil. The phenomena were so novel to those who had fixed their habitation in the vicinity, that the frequency with which it changed its course was ascribed to the influence of magic. It was called *Fulalæk*, or the fœtid torrent, on account of the sulphureous smell of its water, a property the river still has, and which shows that a quantity of sulphur must exist in the bowels of the Yökul in which it originates.

The Solheim-sand Yökul stretches here along the north side of the sand, and is relieved on the west by the lofty Eyafialla Yökul, which is about 5,500 feet in height, and is more than half covered with snow and ice. It is this ice mountain which is generally first discovered by those who sail for the southern ports of the island. It is remarkable, that the last eruption of Kötlugjá threw the Solheim-sand Yökul into such violent convulsions, that it rose and fell by turns, and was at last raised so high that it appeared double its former size.

From this place, the road runs past the two farms of Skogar, close by the more westerly of which, is the most beautiful water-fall on the island. The river descends between high ledges of broken rock till it reaches a perpendicular precipice, over which it is thrown in one unbroken sheet, measuring at least fifteen feet in breadth, and about forty in height. Crossing the Cataract river, I came to a mountain composed of a rough species of tuffa, and which has been terribly rent and disrupted by the earthquakes which are so common in this quarter. Masses, several hundred square feet in size, have been dislodged on the plain; and at one place in particular, nearly the half of the mountain appears to have been

overthrown, while the remainder assumes the most impending attitude. Yet in this situation, perilous as it may appear, several farmers have raised their habitations, and turned the disrupted masses of rock to their advantage, by converting the large caves, which are contained in them, into sheep-cotes, stables, and hay-lofts. One of these I entered on passing, and found it nearly full of hay, together with harness, and other implements of husbandry, which were hanging around the walls; but am sorry that the hay prevented me from discovering the entrance to what, I have since been apprised, forms the most remarkable thing about the cave—a vast apartment, measuring seventy-two feet in length, by twenty-four in breadth, and twelve in height, within which is a smaller room, serving for a bed-chamber, which is fifteen feet long, and nine in breadth. Both places are said to have been cut out by people in former times; and, according to a tradition current in the neighborhood, it was inhabited by a champion named Hrutur; who, retiring into this strong hold, set his enemies at defiance, till at last they dug through the roof of this cave and killed him.

At the western termination of this mountain, the plain runs back between the mountains forming the base of the Eyafialla Yökul; and, though the tract be of no great breadth, I question if there be a spot in Iceland that is better inhabited. At one view, I counted not fewer than twenty-five farm houses and two or three churches. Passing through Steinar, a village consisting of seven families, and the first I had seen since leaving Zealand, I arrived, about seven in the evening, at a farm called Varmahlid, and tented on a dry sloping ground to the east of the houses.

Next morning, before I got fully dressed, I was surprised by the peasant, who, drawing aside the cloth of my tent door, presented me with a large bowl of excellent coffee. It was in vain I remonstrated against the trouble to which they had put themselves; he courteously replied, that I was so uncommon a guest, that centuries might elapse ere another such traveller came to Varmahlid, and the object of my journey being so noble, it was their duty to contribute the little that lay in their power to my accommodation and comfort. I had no sooner left my tent,

than I was invited into the house, where I found a mahogany table, furnished with a delicious dish of hashed fish, after which, skyr and cream were served up. I had also the pleasure of eating rye-bread, baked in the Icelandic manner. The rites of hospitality were performed by an elderly female, step-mother to the peasant, who was dressed in her Sunday-clothes, and presented a very respectable appearance. Every thing about the room looked neat and clean ; and the small library was adorned with a well-bound copy of the quarto Bible.

Leaving Varmahlid, I proceeded on to the church and parsonage of Hollt ; on my arrival at which, I discovered that the clergyman, Sira Briniolfr Sivertson, was the same individual who had long officiated in Reykiavik, and had only left it for this place a few weeks before I came to the island. It was cause of mutual regret that I had not spent the night with him, especially as the exchange of a few words convinced us that we were "of one mind," relative to the importance and value of the Gospel of Christ. After spending about an hour and a half with him and his interesting lady, who kindly prepared coffee for me, I again left Hollt, accompanied by Sira B. who proceeded till within a little of the termination of the Eyafialla mountains, and expressed the most lively joy on hearing of the mighty triumphs of divine revelation. A little before we parted, we stopped a few minutes to survey a curious cascade on the brow of the mountain, at least eight hundred feet high. What rendered it peculiarly interesting was the circumstance, that though the quantity of water precipitated over the rocks was by no means inconsiderable, yet it was prevented from falling by a strong current of air ascending from the foot of the mountain, which converted the whole column into spray, and carrying it up like a cloud into the atmosphere : nothing could more exactly resemble the column of steam arising from the hot springs. I was told by the clergyman that this cascade serves as a mark to the fishermen, who repair from the main-land to the Vestmanna Islands, as its falling in an unbroken sheet to the base of the precipice is a proof that there is but little wind sweeping along the coast ; but when it is borne up in the manner just described, they are then certain that the beach is inaccessible.

As I rode along, after parting with Sira B. I was entertained by the interesting conversation of a peasant, who was travelling to Reykiavik in order to dispose of his country produce. The knowledge he discovered of the geography and politics of Britain quite astonished me. He gave me a long detail of the events that transpired during the usurpation of Cromwell, and proposed several questions relative to the Thames, Tay, Forth, &c. His acquaintance with these things he has chiefly derived from Danish books; and having lately fallen in with an interesting work in German, he has begun to learn that language, in order to make himself master of its contents. I could not help smiling when he told me, in as grave and positive a tone as if he had been versed in all the learning of the schools, that the late Dr. Jonson of Skalholt was profoundly skilled, not only in theology, but also in *philosophy*. This last word he pronounced with an emphasis and an air, which indicated a conviction of his having said something big with important meaning. As a proof that he had not read the Scriptures without reflection, I may mention his being somewhat at a loss to account for the term wrath being ascribed to God in the Bible; and it was not till I had explained to him the difference between holy and reasonable anger, and that which is unreasonable and malicious, and shown him that the expression, as applied to the Divine Being, signified his disapprobation of every species of iniquity, and was ultimately resolvable into his love of righteousness, that he declared himself satisfied on the subject.

As the road to Oddè, where I intended stopping all night, was distinctly visible, being well trod, and lying across a tract covered with volcanic sand, I left the men to bring on the baggage at their leisure, and proceeded forward by myself, in order to call on the conrector of the late school at Skalholt, whose house lay directly in my way. This aged gentleman I found to be a zealous lover of sacred literature; and, what is of still greater importance, a sincere friend to vital and practical religion. Having spent about two hours with him, he favored me with a man to conduct me through the river to Oddè, where I arrived a little past nine o'clock.

On entering the house, it gave me pain to think I had

come so late, as most of the family were gone to bed ; but I had not spent many minutes in admiring the neatness and modern style of a room into which I was shown, when the Dean, Sira Steingrimr Jonson, made his appearance, and in the frankest and most affectionate manner, bade me welcome to Iceland and to his house. In this gentleman, my expectations, which had been raised to no ordinary pitch by what I had read in Sir George Mackenzie's Travels, were fully met, and even exceeded ; and I can only, with that traveller and his companions, regret that I did not enjoy more of his company. With his extensive classical acquirements, he unites great urbanity of manners ; and is deservedly held in the highest esteem and repute by his countrymen.

In a short time, his lady, the relict of the Bishop just mentioned, came into the room, and very politely served up an excellent supper of rice and milk. About midnight I was shown into a sleeping-room, where there was an excellent bed, which I could not but conclude, from every appendage, to have belonged to the episcopal see ; and not having slept in a house since leaving Berufjord, which was now upwards of a fortnight, I was the more sensible of the luxury of my accommodation.

It frequently happens, that places which have been rendered famous by the celebrity of their possessors, fall in the course of time into other hands, and scarcely retain a single vestige of their former lustre. It is, however, very different at the present day with respect to Oddè. Its present occupant is a worthy successor of Sæmund Sigfusson, Jon Loptson, and other distinguished characters, who have flourished here during the earlier and more interesting periods of Icelandic literature. Sæmund, commonly surnamed Frodè, or The Learned, who had spent several years at the most renowned Universities of Germany and France, and would, in all probability, have been lost to his country, had it not been for the interposition of his relation, Jon Ogmundson, entered into holy orders on his return to Iceland, and established, at Oddè, a seminary for the education of youth. He likewise applied himself to the composition of several literary works, none of which, however, have reached our times, except the poetic part of those valuable remnants

of Scandinavian antiquity, comprehended under the general name of The Edda ; and, from this circumstance, intituled Sæmund's Edda, to distinguish it from the prosaic part, which is generally ascribed to Snorro Sturluson. As Snorro spent sixteen years at Oddè, under the tuition of Jon Loftson, the grandson of Sæmund, he had an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge, not only of the Eddic poetry itself, but also of the sources from which it had been derived.

Oddè is situated on the south-east side of a number of low hills, which are completely overgrown with grass, and form a very extensive *tún*. On the morning of the 17th, the Dean accompanied me to the top of the highest, from which I had a fine view of the surrounding plain. It is perhaps the most extensive that is to be met with on the island, being not less than twenty miles in every direction ; and as the volcanic ashes and sand, which compose its foundation, are in most places covered with a pretty thick soil, it affords uncommonly rich pasturage. I had, at the same time, a magnificent view of Mount Heckla, which reared its snow-capped summits to the clouds, and, by calling to mind the desolations it has spread upon the adjacent country, inspired the mind with a temporary melancholy and gloom. Were it not for this circumstance, combined with the number of its recorded eruptions, there is little in the appearance of Heckla to attract the notice of the traveller, even supposing him never to have seen any other mountains but those in the vicinity. Having been accustomed to hear of this volcano as rivalling Vesuvius and Etna, a strong prejudice in favor of its magnitude and grandeur had rooted itself in my mind, and I had formed the idea that the very sight of it must be replete with gratification. Now, however, when I had it direct before me, at the distance of about twenty four miles, it sunk into comparative insignificance ; nor do I conceive there is any thing about Heckla that is calculated to make an indelible impression on the memory, except an actual eruption, which, of course, must present a spectacle never to be forgotten.

Heckla is situated about thirty miles back from the coast, and is estimated at somewhat near 4000 feet in height. Its summit is divided into three peaks, the

middle of which is the highest. The craters form vast hollows on the sides of these peaks, and, according to the last accounts, are partially filled with snow. The mountain itself consists, for the most part, of sand and slags; the lava being confined to the lower regions, and forming an immensely rugged and vitrified wall around its base. From this circumstance it has been concluded, that the lava has not proceeded from the craters at the summit of Heckla, but from apertures at no great elevation on its sides.

This famous volcano is supposed to have emitted lava previous to the occupation of the island; but, subsequent to that period, *twenty-three* eruptions are recorded, of which the dates, and the intervals that existed between them, are as follows.

Number.		Date.	Interval between the eruptions.
1.	-	A. D. 1004	
2.	-	1029	25 years.
3.	-	1105	76 —
4.	-	1113	8 —
5.	-	1157	44 —
6.	-	1206	49 —
7.	-	1222	16 —
8.	-	1294	72 —
9.	-	1300	6 —
10.	-	1340	40 —
11.	-	1374	34 —
12.	-	1390	16 —
13.	-	1436	46 —
14.	-	1510	74 —
15.	-	1554	44 —
16.	-	1583	29 —
17.	-	1619	36 —
18.	-	1625	6 —
19.	-	1636	11 —
20.	-	1693	57 —
21.	-	1728	35 —
22.	-	1754	26 —
23.	-	1766—1768	12 —

From these dates it will appear, that sometimes a considerable period intervenes between the eruptions, and

that nearly fifty years have now elapsed since the last time the volcano was in action. It is to be observed, however, that these eruptions have differed greatly, both in point of magnitude and duration. Some of them have only lasted a few days, others for months, and some have continued more than a year.

The surrounding country was formerly inhabited almost close to the mountain, and is said to have been uncommonly beautiful and fertile ; but the successive inundations of lava have entombed the farms ; and the verdant meadows have been almost entirely covered with sand and pumice. The circumjacent farms suffered considerably in the eruption of 1766 ; but the principal damage was done to the districts in the north of Iceland, by the ashes that were carried by the wind to that quarter.

The population of the Deanery consists of 3,999 souls ; few of the families are in possession of the Scriptures ; and not more than the half are able to purchase copies of the present edition, notwithstanding the low price at which they are sold. Sira S. had already matured a plan for their distribution, and he assured me they would be received with the utmost gratitude and joy.

From Breidabolstad, the road runs in a northerly direction, and leads, all at once, into one of the most gloomy and inhospitable regions I have yet traversed. It forms part of a long range of irregular and shapeless mountains, which partly owes its origin to the awful effects of subterraneous fire, and has partly been overturned during subsequent convulsions. Beds of lava lie scattered here in every direction ; and I found it no easy matter to elude the cracks and fissures which every now and then opened into the road.

Just before leaving this singularly wild desert, I was surprised by a fine flock of rein-deer, marching slowly down the side of the mountain close beside me. They were more than fifty in number, and were under the guidance of a noble stag, who led the van, and every now and then turned round to look at me, and inspect the state of his troops. What is said of the wild ass, may equally apply to the stag : “ Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.” Job xxxviii. 6, 8. It was in these

mountains, that three reindeer were introduced from Lapland, in the year 1770, and they have now multiplied to that degree, that they form numerous herds, and subsist on the moss which grows plentifully in this quarter. It is but seldom that any of them are killed, the inhabitants suffering them to remain in quiet possession of these desolate regions. They appeared much tamer than I should have supposed, and allowed me to ride within half a gunshot of them, before they mended their pace.

After a very fatiguing ride, I came to the "Giant's Children," a number of minute, but singularly interesting volcanic chimnies, which have been formed by the cooling of the lava. They are from five to eight feet in height, and the largest may be twenty feet around the base. They are all hollow within; most of them domed, and presenting more or less of a lateral opening through which the melted substances have obtained a fresh vent. The lava is strongly vitrified, and its color varies from a black to a light green. The outside of the dome exhibits a slaty appearance, resembling the scales of a fish, while it is hung within with the most beautiful stalactites. Some of these craters serve for sheep-pens; and in one of them I discovered a hard bed of lava, which is used by those who traverse this tract in winter. I had no sooner quitted this interesting spot, than I recognised the Esian and other mountains to the north-east of Reykiavik. I now applied for the last time to my stock of provisions, and leaving my servant to bring up the baggage-horses at his leisure, I rode on to Reykiavik, where I arrived about five o'clock in the afternoon, September 20th, after an absence of fifty-eight days, and performing a journey of more than 1200 British miles.

## CHAP. VIII.

Winter in Iceland—Climate—Greenland ice—Aurora Borealis—Traveling—Occupations in general—Winter employments—Fishery—Manner in which the Icelanders spend the long evenings—Family devotion—Education—Solitude of Winter—Tone of Society at Reykiavik.

THOUGH this island occupies a more southerly latitude, and presents, on the whole, a much greater extent of vegetation than the adjacent continent, it has nevertheless been unfortunately doomed to bear the repulsive name of Iceland, while the other has been favored with the pleasing and animating appellation of Greenland. The imposition of these names was wholly arbitrary, according to the accidental circumstances of the individuals with whom they originated. Floki, the third adventurer to Iceland, happening to ascend one of the mountains in the western peninsula, discovered a bay completely filled with Greenland ice, and therefore thought himself entitled to change the name given to the island by his predecessors, to that which it has ever since retained. The consequence has been, that the generality of those who inhabit more genial climes, have viewed it as equally inhospitable with the most rigid of the polar regions, and considered the natives as exposed to all the benumbing influence of relentless frosts, and perpetually immersed in ice and snow. This, however, is far from being the case. The climate is perhaps more unsettled, but it is very seldom that the cold is more intense than in the south of Scandinavia. At first, I confess, I shuddered at the idea of spending a winter in Iceland; but what was my surprise when I found the temperature of the atmosphere not only greater than that of the preceding winter in Denmark,

but equal to that of the mildest I have lived either in Denmark or Sweden !

In the month of November, the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer did not sink lower than  $20^{\circ}$ , and it was nearly as often above the freezing point as below it. On the 6th of December, with clear weather and a light breeze from the east-north-east, it sunk to  $8^{\circ} 30''$ , after which, especially towards the end of the year, the weather became remarkably mild, and continued in this state till near the middle of January ; the thermometer for the most part between  $34^{\circ}$  and  $40^{\circ}$ . On the 10th and 11th of January it fell as low as  $15^{\circ} 30''$ , but rose again in a short time, and continued much more frequently above than below the point of congelation till the 7th of March, when we had a strong wind from the N. N. W., and the mercury, which had stood the preceding day between  $30^{\circ}$  and  $34^{\circ}$ , sunk in the morning to  $9^{\circ} 30''$ , at noon to  $8^{\circ}$ , and at 9 o'clock in the evening it fell as low as  $4^{\circ} 30'$ , which was the strongest degree of frost we had the whole winter.

The quantity of snow that fell during the winter was very considerable, especially in the northern parts of the island, where many of the peasants were reduced to circumstances of great distress, by the total consumption of the fodder they had provided for their cattle. The atmosphere was on the whole rather clear and serene, than darkened by mists, which is in a great measure to be ascribed to the prevalence of brisk land winds, to which the mountainous nature of the country is extremely favorable.

It must, at the same time, be allowed, that the winter of 1814, as well as that which immediately preceded it, was considered by the Icelanders as uncommonly mild. The keenest frost ever experienced in Iceland was in the year 1348, when the ocean was congealed all round the island, so as to admit of the inhabitants riding ou horseback from the one promontory to the other on the ice.

Nothing so materially affects the climate of Iceland as the arrival of the floating ice from the opposite coast of Greenland. Generally towards the end of winter, and sometimes in the beginning of summer, it is seen moving towards the coast in immense masses, which are not unfrequently piled one above another, and more resemble

islands with mountains, castles, and spires, than bodies of ice. They are so thick that they have been known to run aground in eighty fathoms' water. Their motion is not so much accelerated by the wind as by the current ; but their rapidity, when impelled by these two causes conjointly, is so great, that no six-oared boat is able to keep up with them. When the sea is agitated by a storm, the ice-islands are dashed against each other in the most tremendous manner ; the noise arising from the crash is heard at a great distance ; and, as often happens, the drift timber jammed in between the masses takes fire from the friction, presenting to the eye of the spectator a scene the most incongruous that can possibly be imagined. The quantity of floating ice is commonly so great, that it not only chokes up all the friths and bays, but extends to such a distance in the ocean that its termination cannot be discovered from the summit of the highest mountain ; and in the year 1766 the whole of the vast strait between Iceland and Greenland was entirely closed up with it.\* It principally infests the northern, and part of the eastern coasts, as likewise the western friths, but it is seldom that it surrounds the whole island.

While the masses of ice remain in a state of fluctuation, sometimes at a distance, and sometimes nearer the coast, the weather is very unsettled, and the winds are cold and damp ; but when they are driven into the bays, and the salt water freezes around them, the weather becomes more steady ; the cold increases ; and insalubrious fogs are carried over the whole island. The consequences are, that the winter snows are longer in melting ; it is late before the frost leaves the ground ; vegetation is more backward and scanty ; and the summer so short, that the peasants have great difficulty in getting home the small quantity of hay that may have been produced. Add to this, the devastations committed by the Greenland bears, which sometimes arrive in considerable numbers on the ice.†

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\* Tremarec's Relat. d'un Voyage dans la Mer du Nord.

† It frequently happens that the natives of Iceland are pursued by the Polar bear, when he has been long at sea, and his natural ferocity has been strengthened by the keenness of hunger ; yet, though unarmed, they generally make their escape. Observing him approach them, they simply throw down a mitten into the path, and the bear, on coming up to it, is so power-

The most striking aërial phenomenon exhibited by an Icelandic winter, is doubtless the aurora borealis, or northern lights, which are here seen in all their brilliancy and grandeur. I had an opportunity of contemplating them almost every clear night the whole winter, sometimes shooting across the hemisphere in a straight line, and presenting to the view, for a whole evening, one vast steady stream of light ; but, more commonly, they kept dancing and running about with amazing velocity, and a tremulous motion, exhibiting, as they advanced, some of the most beautiful curvated appearances. On gaining one point of the hemisphere, they generally collected as if to muster their forces, and then began again to branch out into numerous ranks, which struck off to the greatest distances from each other as they passed the zenith, yet so as always to preserve the whole of the phenomenon in an oval shape ; when they contracted nearly in the same way as they expanded ; and, after uniting in a common point, they either returned in the course of a few minutes, or were lost in a stream of light, which grew fainter and fainter, the nearer it approached the opposite side of the heavens. They were mostly of a dunnish yellow, yet often assuming mixtures of red and green. When they are particularly quick and vivid, a crackling noise is heard, resembling that which accompanies the escape of the sparks from an electric machine. They almost always took their rise from the summit of Mount Esian, which is about due north-east from Reykiavik, and proceeded in a south-west direction. When visible the whole length of the hemisphere, they were uniformly strongest towards the north and north-east, and were always sure to be seen in that quarter, when they appeared nowhere else. Once or twice I observed them in the south, but they were very faint and stationary.

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fully attracted by the smell of the perspiration, that he instantly stops, and it is not till after he has turned the thumb, and every finger of the mitten inside out, that he recommences the pursuit. By this time the Icelanders have got to a considerable distance; and should he again threaten to overtake them, by dropping one mitten after another, they may succeed in retarding his progress till they have effected their escape.

As soon as it is known that a bear has arrived on the island, the inhabitants of the district collect, and go with fire arms in pursuit of him ; and the individual who kills him is not only well paid for the skin, which is reckoned very valuable, but receives besides a considerable reward from the King of Denmark.

In the days of superstition, these celestial wonders were viewed as portending certain destruction to nations and armies, and filled the minds even of the more enlightened with terror and dismay. At the present day, the Icelander is entirely free from such silly apprehensions, and only regards their uncommonly vivid appearance as predicting a hurricane or storm: an observation founded on experience, and which I frequently brought to the test, when it invariably turned out, that in less than twenty-four hours after the northern lights were in great commotion, we had either sudden squalls or a heavy gale of wind from the north.

It was scarcely ever possible for me to view this phenomenon without reflecting on Job xxxvii. 22. "The golden splendor cometh out of the north;" and it seems extremely probable, that it is to them Elihu here alludes. The idea not only agrees with the light spoken of in the preceding verse, but is far more suitable to the latter clause of this same verse, "with God is terrible majesty." In some parts of Asia, the northern lights are so terrible, that "they strike the beholders with horror. Every animal is struck with terror; even the dogs of the hunters are seized with such dread, that they will fall on the ground, and remain immovable till the cause is over."<sup>\*</sup>

From the picture which the foregoing part of the journal presents of the state of the roads, and the difficulties inseparably connected with travelling in Iceland during the summer, an idea may be formed of the almost total impracticability of any such attempt in winter. The distance between the houses; the dreadful chasms and rents in the lava hidden by the snow; the rivers either choked full of ice, or but slightly frozen, with numerous other circumstances,—all combine to present obstacles, which few have the courage, or the physical strength, to surmount. In general, no Icelander undertakes a journey of greater length the whole winter than to his parish-church; and it often happens—though never without reluctance—that he must abandon even this tour for weeks together. Two posts are dispatched each season from the north, and one or two from Reykiavik to the eastern and western

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\* Pennant's Arctic Zoology, Introduct. p. 102.

quarters of the island : otherwise, a traveller is scarcely ever heard of till near the end of winter, when the people begin to come from the north to the fishing. They then proceed across the shortest desert between the north and south countries ; yet they frequently suffer much from the journey, and it is seldom a winter passes without some perishing in this way. This very season several have fallen a prey to the inclemency of the weather. In a journey of this sort, it is not often that horses can be used : the traveller is obliged to trudge it on foot, to ford the rivers, if the ice should not be capable of bearing him, and, when benighted at a distance from any house, he either seeks shelter in a subterraneous cavern, or builds a house of snow, in which he reposes till the light of day again calls him to proceed on his journey. His greatest danger arises from his exposure to heavy falls of snow, by which the bearings of the mountains (his only way-marks) are concealed from view.

It appears from several of the ancient Sagas, that sledges were in pretty common use in former times in Iceland. At present they are almost wholly unknown ; which will be deemed the more surprising by those who are acquainted with their utility to the Laplanders, as the island abounds with reindeer, which might easily be tamed and inured to the yoke.

Strictly speaking, there are only two seasons in Iceland, summer and winter ; the former of which, short and precarious as it is, the natives must employ with assiduity, in order to make provision for the latter. From the 3d of February to the 12th of May, is what the Icelanders call the fishing season ; at which period vast numbers of the inhabitants flock to the southern and western shores from the districts in the north and east, where the fishing is generally impracticable at this time, owing to the bays and creeks being filled with polar ice. They provide themselves with a complete skin-dress, consisting of the *brok*, in the shape of small clothes and stockings, all in one piece; the *stack* or large jacket, which falls down, and is tied close over the *brok*, so as to prevent the water from getting in between them ; and tight-setting shoes of the same material, below which are worn coarse woollen stockings for greater warmth. The most of them live

almost entirely, during this period, on butter and fish. They breakfast about two hours before sun-rise, and taste nothing till they return from sea in the evening, excepting sometimes a little whey, which they take with them for the purpose of quenching their thirst. The boats are generally manned with six or eight hands besides the steersman, and row sometimes to a great distance out to sea.

When they return from fishing, and land on the beach, the boat is hauled up, and the fish are thrown out and heaped together in separate parcels, according to the number of men in the boat, with two additional shares which belong to the boat, and are claimed by the owner for the use of it, and the fishing lines and hooks, which are provided at his expense. The fishermen being fatigued, repair immediately to their huts, and the splitting and carrying home of the fish is commonly left to the women and children.

The principal fish they catch in this way is the cod. They cut off the heads, which they also dry, and sell to the poorer part of the population ; the bones are sometimes used for feeding their cattle with ; and in some parts of the island they use them for fuel. The fish are laid out on the cliffs, or a large surface of flat stones on the beach, and there dried in the sun, while the utmost care is taken that they are not exposed to rain or damp. They dry in the course of three weeks, and afterwards are stacked upon the beach, and take no damage whatever from the rain.

Sometimes the fish are hung up and dried in houses, which are so constructed that the wind has a free passage through them, while they are sufficiently covered to keep out the rain.

Besides supplying the natives with one of their most essential articles of food, they are thus provided by the sea with a valuable barter against foreign productions which they may need ; and the Danish merchants not only supply, in a great measure, the north of Europe with dried cod-fish, but send several cargoes of them to Spain, and the markets in the Mediterranean, where they are purchased for the use of the Catholics during lent.

When the snow leaves the ground, the females spread

the manure which had lain on the *tún* in heaps all winter, and collect any stones that may have gathered on it. The men are employed in cutting turf both for fuel and a covering to their houses, and making charcoal for the use of the smithy. When the young cattle have been turned out on the mountains, the care of the cows and sheep is left to the female part of the family, who milk them twice a-day, make curds, butter, cheese, &c.; and they repair in companies, about the middle of summer, to collect the Lichen *Islandicus*, in the uninhabited parts of the country. They have, generally, a man or two with them: and the few weeks they spend in this employment in the desert, are regarded as the happiest of the whole year. They live in tents, which they remove from place to place, according to the greater or less abundance of the moss. At this time the men are either out at the fresh-water fishing, or proceeding in cavalcades to the factories, where they barter their home productions against articles of necessary use for the winter.

The most important branch of rural labor in Iceland is the hay-making. About the middle of July, the peasant begins to cut down the grass of the *tún*, which is immediately gathered to a convenient place, in order to dry, and after having been turned once or twice, is conveyed home on horseback to the yard, where it is made up into stacks. At the poorer farms, both men and women handle the scythe; but, in general, the women only assist in making the hay after it is cut. In many parts of the island, where there is much hay, the peasants hire men from the fishing-places, who are paid for their labor at the rate of thirty pounds of butter per week. They cut by measurement; the daily task being about thirty square fathoms.

Hay harvest being over, the sheep and cattle that had been out all summer on the mountains are collected; the houses are put in a state of repair for the winter; the wood needed for domestic purposes is brought home to each farm; the turf is also taken in; and the labors of the season conclude with the removal of manure to different parts of the *tún*.

During the winter, the care of the cattle and sheep de-

volves entirely on the men ; and consists chiefly in feeding and watering the former, which are kept in the house, while the latter are turned out in the day-time to seek their food through the snow. When the snow happens to be so deep that they cannot scrape it away themselves, the boys do it for them ; and as the sustenance thus procured is exceedingly scanty, they generally get a little of the meadow-hay, about this time. The farm hay is given to the cows alone. All the horses, excepting perhaps a favorite riding horse, are left to shift for themselves the whole winter, during which season they never lie down, but rest themselves by standing in some place of shelter.

The domestic employments of this season are multiplied and various. The men are occupied in fabricating necessary implements of iron, copper, wood, &c. ; and some of them are wonderfully expert, as silversmiths ; their work, at times, in this branch, being only distinguishable from that done in Copenhagen by the absence of the stamp. They also prepare hides for shoes ; make ropes of hair or wool ; and full the woollen stuffs, which is generally effected in the following curious manner. Both ends being knocked out of a barrel, it is filled with the articles to be fulled, when it is laid on the side, and two men lie down on their backs, one at either end, with their feet in the barrel, and literally *walk* the cloth, by kicking it against each other. Smaller articles they full by placing them between their knees and breast, and then moving backwards and forwards with the body, turning them always with their hands till ready. This accounts for the very awkward motion which the Icelanders almost always fall into when sitting, and from which many of them cannot refrain even in church. The fisherinnen full their mittens by dipping them now and then in the salt water, while plying at the oar. In some parts of the country, the men also spin and knit like the women, and some of them weave.

Besides preparing the food, the females employ their time in spinning, which is most commonly done with the spindle and distaff, knitting stockings, mittens, shirts, &c. as also in embroidering bed-covers, saddle clothes, and cushions, which they execute with much taste, interspersing flowers and figures of various colors.

A winter evening in an Icelandic family presents a scene in the highest degree interesting and pleasing. Between three and four o'clock the lamp is hung up in the principal apartment, which answers the double purpose of a bed-chamber and sitting-room, and all the members of the family take their station, with their work in their hands, on their respective beds, all of which face each other. The master and mistress, together with the children, or other relations, occupy the beds at the inner end of the room ; the rest are filled by the servants.

The work is no sooner begun, than one of the family, selected on purpose, advances to a seat near the lamp, and commences the evening lecture, which generally consists of some old saga, or such other histories as are to be obtained on the island. Being but badly supplied with printed books, the Icelanders are under the necessity of copying such as they can get the loan of, which sufficiently accounts for the fact, that most of them write a hand equal in beauty to that of the ablest writing-masters in other parts of Europe. Some specimens of their Gothic writing are scarcely inferior to copperplate. The reader is frequently interrupted, either by the head, or some of the more intelligent members of the family, who make remarks on various parts of the story, and propose questions, with a view to exercise the ingenuity of the children and servants. In some houses the sagas are repeated by such as have got them by heart ; and instances are not uncommon of itinerating historians, who gain a livelihood during the winter, by staying at different farms till they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge. It is greatly to be deplored, that a people so distinguished by their love of science, and possessing the most favorable opportunities of cultivating it, should be destitute of the means necessary for improving them to advantage.

The custom just described, appears to have existed among the Scandinavians from time immeinorial. The person chosen as recitor was called Thulr, and was always celebrated for his knowledge of past events, and the dignity and pathos with which he related them. It is to him, and the seat or pulpit on which he was elevated, that Odin alludes, in the following part of the Hâvamâl, or “ Sublime :”—

'Tis time to recite  
 From the seat of eloquence,  
     Close by the fountain of Urd : \*  
 I sat and was silent,  
 I saw and reflected,  
     I listened to that which was told.

Instead of the sagas, some of the more pious substitute the historical books of Scripture; and as they always give the preference to poetry, most of these books have been translated into metre, chiefly with a view to this exercise.

At the conclusion of the evening labors, which are frequently continued till near midnight, the family join in singing a psalm or two; after which, a chapter from some book of devotion is read, if the family be not in possession of a Bible, but where this Sacred Book exists, it is preferred to every other. A prayer is also read by the head of the family, and the exercise concludes with a psalm. Their morning devotions are conducted in a similar manner, at the lamp. When the Icelander awakes, he does not salute any person that may have slept in the room with him, but hastens to the door, and lifting up his eyes towards heaven, adores Him who made the heavens and the earth, the Author and Preserver of his being, and the source of every blessing. He then returns into the house, and salutes every one he meets with, "God grant you a good day!"

There being no parish schools, nor indeed any private establishments for the instruction of youth in Iceland, their mental culture depends entirely on the disposition and abilities of the parents. In general, however, neither of these is wanting; for the natives of this island are endowed with an excellent natural understanding; and their sense of national honor, generated by their familiar acquaintance with the character and deeds of their forefathers, spurs them to emulation, independent of the still more powerful inducement arising from the necessity and importance of religious knowledge. The children are taught their letters, either by the mother, or some other female; and when they have made some progress in reading, they are taught writing and arithmetic by the

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\* By the *Brunn*, or "fountain of Urd," the poet here means the source of wisdom, and intimates, that as he had long sat and listened to the tales of other years, he was now qualified for the chair himself.

father. Every clergyman is bound to visit the different families in his parish twice or thrice a year, on which occasions he catechises both young and old ; but the exercise is attended to, chiefly with a reference to the former, in order to ascertain what degree of knowledge they possess of the fundamental principles of Christianity.

These are all the means of instruction which the great bulk of the Icelandic youth enjoy ; nevertheless, the love of knowledge, superinduced by the domestic habits of those who are their superiors in point of age and mental acquirements, often prompts them to build, of their own accord, on the foundation that has thus been laid ; and I have frequently been astonished at the familiarity with which many of these self-taught peasants have discoursed on subjects, which, in other countries, we should expect to hear started by those only who fill the professor's chair, or who have otherwise devoted their lives to the study of science.

On the introduction of the Reformation into the island, it was designed to establish schools at the different convents, each of which was in possession of landed property more than adequate to defray the expenses ; but this charitable purpose was never carried into effect. Two Latin schools, however, were founded at the episcopal sees of Holum and Skalholt, and so much landed property was appropriated to each, as enabled them to support and educate about forty scholars. At these institutions many of the Icelanders have received a good classical education, by which they have afterwards attained to a distinguished rank in the paths of literature.

During the long winter of eight months which I spent in Iceland, I was never farther from my lodgings than a quarter of a mile, excepting once, that I paid a visit to my worthy friend the Archdeacon at Gardè.

Reykiavik is unquestionably the worst place in which to spend the winter in Iceland. The tone of society is the lowest that can well be imagined. Being the resort of a number of foreigners, few of whom have had any education, and who frequent the island solely for purposes of gain, it not only presents a lamentable blank to the view of the religious observer, but is totally devoid of every source of intellectual gratification. The foreign resi-

dents generally idle away the short-lived day with the tobacco-pipe in their mouths, and spend the evening in playing at cards, and drinking punch. They have two or three balls in the course of the winter, and a play is sometimes acted by the principal inhabitants. To these purposes they appropriate the Court-house, and without ceremony take the benches out of the cathedral, to supply the want of seats. An instance has even been known of the same individual who performed one of the acts in a play till late on Saturday night, making his appearance the following morning in the pulpit, in the character of a public teacher of religion!

The influence of such a state of society on the native Icelanders, in and about Reykiavik, is very apparent. Too many of them seem to imbibe the same spirit, and their "good manners" are evidently getting corrupted by the "evil communication" of the strangers by whom they are visited.

## CHAP. IX.

Journey through the Syssels of Borgarfjord, Myrar, and Snæfellsness—Innraholt—Printing Office—Staffholt—Sheep-pens—Volcano of Western Skardsheidi—Caves of Hytardal—Stadarhraun—Domestic Worship—Elldborg, or Fortress of Fire—Stadarstad—Stappen—Ascent of Snæfell Yökul.

HAVING been convinced, from the facilities afforded me for ascertaining the scarcity of Bibles among the inhabitants, in the course of my journey last autumn, that the most effectual way to ensure the speedy distribution of the Sacred Oracles, was to visit the different officers, both civil and ecclesiastical, and with them concert plans adapted to the local circumstances of their respective districts, I resolved to traverse, this summer, (1815), such parts of the island as I had not yet visited; and, accordingly, about the beginning of May, I began to make preparations for my journey. It is true, the mountains were still covered with snow, and the roads wet, and almost impassable; and all my Icelandic friends endeavored to persuade me that it was a month too early; but as I was heartily wearied of the long confinement, and it was necessary for me to be back at Reykiavik by the end of June, I determined to set off, and proceed by slow stages towards the west.

It was a matter, however, of no small difficulty to obtain horses. As noticed in the foregoing Chapter, the horses of burthen in Iceland are not taken into the house, or fed with hay, during the winter, but are left to shift for themselves, by scraping away the snow, and picking up any scanty remains of vegetation, or frequenting the beach at low water, and eating the sea-weed that is cast ashore. It follows, of course, that they are half starved, and are generally unfit for service before the middle of

June. After having agreed with a young man from the north country to proceed with me, and provide me with horses, I had the disappointment to find that it was not in his power to stand to the agreement, owing to the leanness of the animals; and I must have been detained some weeks, had not the Chief Justice Stephensen been kind enough to furnish me with horses from his estate on the opposite side of the bay.

On the 16th of May, having packed up all my baggage, provided myself with letters from Bishop Vidalin to the different Deans and others of the clergy that lay in my way, and commended myself to the special guidance and protection of Him in whose service I was engaged, I left Reykiavik about ten o'clock, in a six-oared boat, which I had engaged to convey me across the bay. A little past two o'clock, we landed at Innraholt, the estate of the Chief Justice, where, agreeably to the kind orders of that gentleman, I was received with every mark of attention by his steward, and the necessary arrangements were made for the prosecution of my journey.

The farm is very pleasantly situated on a gently rising ground, on the north side of the bay. The dwelling-house is neatly constructed of wood, but surrounded with earthen walls, except in front. The first room a stranger is shown into exhibits a choice library, containing many of the more important works on law, philosophy, theology, language, &c. The other rooms are neatly finished, and furnished with stoves, an article of luxury scarcely ever to be seen at an Icelandic farm.

*May 17.* Sending on the baggage-horses round the east end of the mountain, the steward and I rode round the other end to Gardè, where we met with a hearty welcome from the clergyman. His parishioners are in general very poor, being chiefly dependent on the fishery, and though a great desire prevails among them to obtain copies of the Scriptures, there are few whose circumstances admit of their purchasing them. Having refreshed ourselves with a draught of excellent cream, the clergyman had the kindness to accompany us a considerable way to the west of the parsonage, through a number of dangerous bogs, which we should have found it impossible to cross, had it not been for his guidance, and the *klaki*, or frost, which still existed at no great depth.

About two o'clock, we reached the residence of Mr. Scheving, the Sysselman of Borgarfjord. After coffee, I exchanged guides, the Sysselman engaging to conduct me himself to the residence of the Amptman, where I intended stopping all night. At a short distance to the north-west, he pointed out to me the farm of Leyrârgördum, the site of the only printing-office on the island, but which is at present without employment, owing chiefly to prejudices conceived by the Icelanders against the publications which issued from it some years ago. Nor were these prejudices entirely without foundation; for many of the writings in question had but too glaring a tendency to introduce the illumination of the German school, and the attacks made on certain classes of the inhabitants were too pointed and violent not to excite indignation.

About eleven o'clock we arrived at the residence of Amptman Stephensen. This gentleman I had seen in the autumn at Reykiavik; and in consequence of the conversation we then had about the circulation of the Scriptures, he had written an official letter to all his Sysselmen in conjunction with the Deans, ordering an inquiry to be instituted relative to the want of copies, and a report to be given of the number of those who were able and inclined to purchase, as also of such as required to be furnished gratuitously. He now received me in the most distinguished manner, and, with his lady and the whole of the family, was assiduous in providing for the comfort of the wearied traveller. After supping on excellent roast beef, a dish very uncommon in Iceland, accompanied with good Port wine, I retired to sleep, which I greatly enjoyed, having been much fatigued by the ride of the preceding day, which could not be less than thirty-six miles.

Next morning, after partaking of a cold breakfast and coffee, I took leave of the interesting family at Hvítárvöllum, and proceeded to the deanery of Staffholt. In this excursion I had the honor to be accompanied by the Amptman himself, and one of his sons, the Sysselman, and the clergyman of Hest with his son. At one of the fords of the Hvítâ, which we had to cross, a very singular case happened last summer, as the people were riding to church. The horse of one of the peasants taking fright,

when about the deepest part of the river, his rider was thrown into the water, and as he was at a great distance from either bank, and being, besides, ignorant of the art of swimming, the spectators gave him up for lost. Happening, however, to get on his back, and extending his hands and feet, he kept his head above water, and was carried gently down by the stream: his companions riding along the banks, and talking with him all the while, till, after having floated near a mile, he was cast on a small sand-bank, from which, with little difficulty, he reached the shore.

In the course of an hour we reached Staffholt, where I was made cordially welcome by the Dean, the Reverend Peter Peterson.

On the departure of the Amptman and the rest of the company, the Dean entered into a most lively and interesting conversation with me relative to the Icelandic Scriptures, Bible Societies, the state of religion in different parts of the world, &c. when he produced the letters which he received from his clergy respecting the wants of their parishioners. The perusal of these documents convinced me of the vehement desire manifested by the people to obtain copies; while I as evidently perceived, that a great number must remain destitute of them, except furnished with them on the same terms with the salvation of the Gospel itself—"without money, and without price."

At an early hour on the 19th, I ordered my horses to be got ready, and, before setting off, I had the pleasure to find, that the Dean and his son had resolved to proceed with me all the way to the next station, which lies about thirty miles distant from Staffholt. I was the happier at this, as I found the Dean a very conversible man, and eagerly desirous of discussing topics of a religious nature. The road now lay in a westerly direction across a number of very irregular heights, in some places covered with stunted birches, and in others consisting of bleak and barren rocks, the fragments of which were intermixed with abundance of zeolite. Leaving this, we came to the entrance of a pass in the western Skardsheidi, where we stopped some time, in order to rest our horses.

In the mean time, the Dean took me to an immense ravine, formed by the waters of the Glufrâ, into which,

on a certain day in autumn, all the sheep are collected that have been feeding at large on the mountains during the summer. The place is called the "Pens of the Cloven Precipice." An order being sent from the constable of the district, the peasants collect from their respective farms, and, under the direction of one of their number, chosen on the occasion, and to whom they give the title of "King," they proceed to the mountains, where they pitch their tents in a convenient place, and go, two in company, in search of the sheep, according to the orders of their sovereign. Having spent several days in this manner, and collected the sheep, they lift their tents, and drive the whole flock down to this place, when they are confined in the large pen, which is defended, on the one side, by the river, and on the other, by a high range of perpendicular cliffs; so that there is no possibility of their making their escape. As each farmer has his particular mark on the ear of his sheep, they are easily separated, and confined in smaller pens, which are built of lava, and lie scattered along the south side of the river. What with the bleating of perhaps 1500 sheep, the noise made by the peasants in proving their property, and the appearance of the pens and tents which crowd the valley—this desert tract assumes, on such occasions, a most lively aspect, and furnishes a temporary relief from the silent monotony of Icelandic life.

Having reached the middle of the pass in safety, we found ourselves in the immediate vicinity of the extinguished volcano of Western Skardsheidi. Here we found seven remarkable spiracles or chimnies, five of which are situated on the east, and two on the west side of the road. The former are small, not exceeding 40 feet in perpendicular height, and measuring from 150 to 200 feet in circumference around their base. They are complete cones, and have been hollow within for some time after the eruption; but the cinders, &c. having mouldered with age into the craters, they are, in a great measure, filled up, though, at the same time, they exhibit ample proof of their circular formation. The lava on the outside of these spiracles is mostly of a red color, strongly vitrified, light, and broken into small fragments.

After we had ascended each of the cones in succession,

and admired the regular uniformity of their structure, we returned to our horses, and, proceeding a little on to the west, arrived at the base of the other two chimneys, which, from their magnitude, and every other attendant circumstance, evidently appear to have been the principal craters of the volcano. The more easterly may be about 300 feet high, and is double as much around the base. Its ascent was attended with much fatigue, as our feet always sunk in the scoriæ or drosses, and these being set in motion by our weight, we often slid down again to a considerable distance before we stopped. The drosses are small, of a red color, and very friable. On gaining the summit, the crater instantly opened upon us, situated exactly in the centre, and bearing the most perfect resemblance to an inverted cone. It appeared to be about 200 feet in diameter from brim to brim, but not exceeding 60 feet in depth. Its sides were for the most part covered with snow, and a small hole filled with water appeared at the bottom. The brim is several feet lower towards the east; and from this place a small valley or channel, nearly of the same depth with the crater, stretches due east towards the five minor chimneys above described; which, as they all lie in the same direct line, have visibly originated in the torrent of lava poured down through this valley. On meeting with some obstruction, it has collected and formed a caldron or furnace, which, being augmented by fresh matter from the main source, has ultimately given way on the opposite side, and the lava continuing to flow, has successively thrown up the cones till it reached the fifth and smallest in the row. The heights on both sides of the valley consist of the same red scoriæ with those covering the exterior of the crater, and are sharpened towards the summit. From this crater, the lava has flowed which covers the tract to the north and east.

At a short distance farther west lies the primary chimney, or volcanic cone, at least 550 feet high, and exceeding 1800 feet in circumference around its base. The crater is proportionably large, being not less than 400 feet in diameter at the mouth, and exceeding 150 feet in depth. At the bottom were two pools filled with clear water, but of what depth I could not determine, as the snow about the sides of the crater prevented all access to them. This

huge furnace opens into a small dale like the former, but it only proceeds a short way in an easterly direction, when it turns all at once to the south and south-west; and through this channel an immense stream of burning matter has rushed towards the south, where the declivitous tendency of the ground has allowed it a free descent into a fine valley, afterwards called Lava Valley, where it has flowed with great velocity and force, and been thrown up in the most singular and capricious forms. Filling the greater part of this long valley, it has continued its course into the plains, which it has inundated to a great extent, carrying destruction to every thing it attacked in its progress.

It was impossible for me to survey the scene that presented itself from the summit of this cone, without, in some measure, realizing in my imagination the awful period of its activity:—the convulsive throes of the ground; the belching of the flames; the thunders of the eruption; the splashing of liquid fire; and the broad streams of devouring lava spreading themselves across the valley. As I revolved these things in my mind, I felt powerfully convinced, that in the following sublime specimens of prophetic poetry, the sacred writers have borrowed their imagery from the tremendous phenomena of a volcanic eruption: “For, behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the vallies shall be cleft, *as wax before the fire*, and *as the waters that are poured down a steep place.*” “Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when *the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil*, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, *the mountains flowed down at thy presence.*” Micah, i. 3, 4. Isaiah, lxiv. 1, 3. See also Nahum, i. 5, 6.

Returning to the Dean, whose corpulency prevented him, much against his inclination, from accompanying us, we again mounted our steeds, and skirted the western margin of the lava, till we arrived at a narrow gully,

which it has almost completely filled, when we were obliged to ascend a steep and rugged hill of brown tuffa, from the summit of which we had a commanding view of a vast assemblage of similar hills, originally produced, and afterwards convulsed, by the agency of subterraneous fires.

We now descended from the mountains through Hraun-dal, where we observed a number of beautiful and singularly grotesque domes of lava which have been thrown up during the progress of the fiery torrent; and proceeded towards the west, along the base of several bold and precipitous mountains, on the opposite side of which we fell in with another stream of lava of an extensive spread. It proceeds from a volcano of the same name, a little to the west of the Skardsheidi mountains, the crater of which resembles those above described, but is much larger, and surrounded by a higher perpendicular wall, exhibiting towards the south a lateral opening where the lava has had its egress. The stream is about six miles in length, and in some places three in breadth. Our path ran across it in a winding direction, now level and smooth, and now obstructed by massy crusts that have been scattered about on the bursting of the domes.

About eight o'clock in the evening, we arrived at the church and parsonage of Stadarhraun, where I got my tent pitched as expeditiously as possible, in order to afford us a shelter from the cold, the mercury in Fahrenheit having fallen to  $29^{\circ}$ . The houses are entirely surrounded by lava except in front, and the greensward forming the *tún* is separated from the same substance only by the depth of a few inches. The clergyman, Sira Daniel Jonsson, I found to be a true Nathaniel, whose whole deportment evinced an eminent degree of simplicity and godly sincerity. He expressed, in very warm terms, the satisfaction he felt at our visit, and did all that lay in his power to provide for our accommodation.

As I had been advised by the Amptman and others to spend the Sabbath at this place, and feeling the more inclined to do so from the consideration of the sterling worth of the incumbent, I went on the 20th, in company with him and the Dean, to pay a visit to Hytardal.

After dining at the parsonage, we accompanied the Dean along the base of the mountains on the east side of

the valley till reaching their termination, when we bade each other an affectionate farewell, and I returned with my new host to Stadarhraun. Sira Daniel and I entered into an animated conversation about the all-important concerns of religion ; and the longer we were together, the more I felt attached to him, and became more and more convinced of the genuineness of his piety, and the purity of his motives as a minister of the gospel of Christ. He has the care of two parishes, in one of which were only *two* copies of the Bible among *fourteen* families. Though there were two copies in his own family, two more had been subscribed for, besides several New Testaments. A poor woman, who was ignorant of her husband's having made application for a copy, came, after the list had been sent in to the Dean, and with many tears lamented her dilatoriness, and the guilt she had contracted in neglecting to avail herself of the golden opportunity ;—but what was her joy, on being informed that a copy had been secured for her !

*May 21st, Lord's Day.* The great bulk of the population being absent at the fishing-places, there was no public worship : yet I was in no ordinary degree interested by witnessing the piety and devotion manifested by the clergyman and his family, eight in number, in the exercise of their domestic worship. We assembled round the altar, which was extremely simple, consisting merely of a coarse wooden table, when several appropriate psalms were sung in a very lively manner, after which a solemn and impressive prayer was offered up, the females, meanwhile, placing their hands flat on their faces, so as entirely to cover their eyes. The clergyman now read an excellent sermon on Regeneration, from Vidalin's collection, which is in great repute over the whole island, and has, perhaps, more than any thing else, contributed to perpetuate a clear and distinct knowledge of the fundamental principles of Christianity among the natives. The service concluded with singing and prayer ; after which, the members of the family gave each other the primitive kiss ; and I could discover, from the joy that beamed in every eye, the actual increase of happiness derived from their renewed approach to the Fountain of Bliss.

After passing Hytärness, we had a fine view of another

*Pendleton's Lithog. Boston*



VIEW OF ELLDBORG FROM THE SOUTH.



singular volcano. At the distance of about two miles due north, and completely surrounded with lava, rose the grand circular crater of Elldborg, which is not only remarkable on account of its singular configuration, but also because it stands quite insulated in the middle of an extensive plain, which it has almost entirely deluged with lava.

Having got the baggage taken off our horses, we set out on foot across the lava, in order to inspect more closely this curious production of nature. The walk proved very rough, and sometimes dangerous, owing to the sharp and cavernous nature of the lava. Several of the largest caves are used for sheep-pens, it being a fact that, when left to follow their own inclination, the sheep repair to them in preference to those constructed by man. On our arrival at the base of the volcano, we could not sufficiently admire the regularity with which it rose by a gradual acclivity till within about eighty feet of the summit, when the heath and every vestige of vegetation ceased, and a wall of dark vitrified lava rose at once in nearly a perpendicular direction, and terminated in a rough and irregular top. From the perfect resemblance of this wall to an immense artificial fortification, it has obtained the name of *Elldborg*, or "The Fortress of Fire." After having rested ourselves a little at the foot of the rampart, we began to scale it; an undertaking which we found attended with no small difficulty, the lava in many places being smooth as glass, and in others broken into minute fragments, which gave way on our stepping upon them, and often compelled us to renew our toil. At length, after several respites, we ultimately reached the summit, when we were not a little alarmed to find that we were only separated from a tremendous abyss by a dome of lava, in many places not exceeding six inches in thickness, extremely loose in its contexture, and mouldering with age into the crater, which opened like an immense basin directly before us. It is not an entire circle, but somewhat oval, its longitude stretching from E. S. E. to W. N. W. The interior of the wall is in general more perpendicular than the exterior, especially on the east side, where it consists of rugged cliffs, among which a number of ravens annually build their nests. Having

encompassed the summit with a measuring-line, and found its circumference to be somewhat more than 1800 feet, we descended into the crater itself, by means of a rude defile on the south-east side, where the wall consisted entirely of thin flat plates of lava, the surface of which was cracked or broken into numerous pieces, and exhibited a strong tendency towards basaltic conformation. When at the bottom, we had a most august view of the clouds, passing in rapid succession across the heavens, which were circumscribed by the lofty walls of the volcano, towering to the height of near 200 feet above us. From about half that height the sides began to slope, and are covered with slags, except on the west side, where there is a good deal of coarse grass, and much angelica. The crater terminates in a small aperture, situated exactly in the centre, and marking the ancient source of devastation and ruin. It is nearly filled with slags, and all around lie a number of large calcined stones, which, towards the end of the eruption, the fire has not been able to throw over the walls of the crater.

Towards evening it grew very cold, the mercury having fallen below the point of congelation. At eight o'clock I took leave of the clergymen of Stadarhraun and Hytárness, while the chaplain of the latter place proceeded with me across the beach. Crossing alternately the projecting streams of lava, and the inlets of the sea which run up between them, we advanced at a noble rate; it being necessary to keep our horses every now and then at the gallop, in order to escape being overtaken by the tide, before we reached the land. At one time, we were nearly two miles from the shore; and, I must confess, I felt rather uneasy, while my companion was relating the number of travellers who had lost their lives, in consequence of their having been unexpectedly surrounded by the sea. The cold wind from the mountains on the right, rendered the ride uncomfortable; otherwise, it was as good travelling as by day, every thing, even at midnight, appearing plain around us. About three o'clock in the morning, the immense snow and ice mountain, called Snæfell Yökul, came into view; at first rather dimly seen, and communicating a dunnish hue to the surrounding atmosphere; but in a short time it began to assume a more

lively aspect, and continued to brighten, till the sun was fully risen, when it shone forth in all its splendor, glistening with a dazzling lustre as it received his beams, and towering to an elevation of near five thousand feet above the level of the sea.

At half past five o'clock, we arrived at the church and parsonage of Stadarstad. The incumbent, Sira Gudmundr Jonson, though about sixty years of age, was already up, and giving orders to his servants about their daily tasks. He received me with every mark of attention, and, after having assisted me in pitching my tent, and ordered some refreshment from the house, he left me to enjoy the repose I so much required, after a long and hard ride.

Sira Gudmundr possesses more information on general subjects, than is commonly to be met with among the Icelandic clergy, and seems to excel in his knowledge of the true principles of Scripture interpretation. The accounts I gave him of the Bible Society, created much interest; and we spent the most of the afternoon in conversation on this subject, and others of a religious nature. He had distributed twenty copies of the New Testament of 1807 in his parishes; but he did not believe there existed more than three whole Bibles among a population of four hundred souls.

On the 24th, accompanied by the Dean, I proceeded to Stappen, a mercantile station belonging to Mr. Hialltalin, by whom I was received in the most polite and hospitable manner. The object of my visit to this harbor, was to ascertain how the copies of the Scriptures had been disposed of which had been sent thither last year; and it gave me great satisfaction to find Mr. Hialltalin warmly attached to the cause, and that he had done every thing that lay in his power to promote the design of the Bible Society. A considerable number of copies had been sold during the winter, notwithstanding the little traffic that is carried on in Iceland at that season of the year; and the orders he had since received, exceeded the remaining number of copies. After settling the measures it would still be necessary to adopt in order to secure a complete supply for the inhabitants of this district, I took a walk with the Dean, and Mr. Hialltalin, junior, to view

the beautiful pillars and stacks of basaltic rock, with which the cliffs are adorned a little to the south of the harbor. Some of them present grottoes, scarcely inferior to that of Fingal in the Western Isles of Scotland.

On awakening the following morning, I obtained, through the windows of my apartment, a noble view of that magnificent work of God, the stupendous Snæfell-Yökul, which gives name to the Syssel, and terminates the long range of mountains that stretch forward and divide the peninsula into two equal parts. I had often admired the majesty of its appearance during my stay at Reykjavik; but now it beetled almost directly over head. Every surrounding object seemed swallowed up by its immincy; and as the atmosphere was pure and serene, I felt the resolution powerfully confirmed, which I had formed the preceding evening, of ascending the Yökul from this place.

There was something so animating and enticing in the idea of the expedition, that the aged Dean himself would certainly have accompanied me, had it not been impossible for him to protract his stay. His place was supplied by Mr. Hialltalin, junior, who also procured three men to attend us, not so much as guides, for none of them, nor indeed any body about the place, had ever been higher than the line of perpetual snow, but to carry our provisions, and a few supernumerary articles of clothing, and to assist us in case of danger.

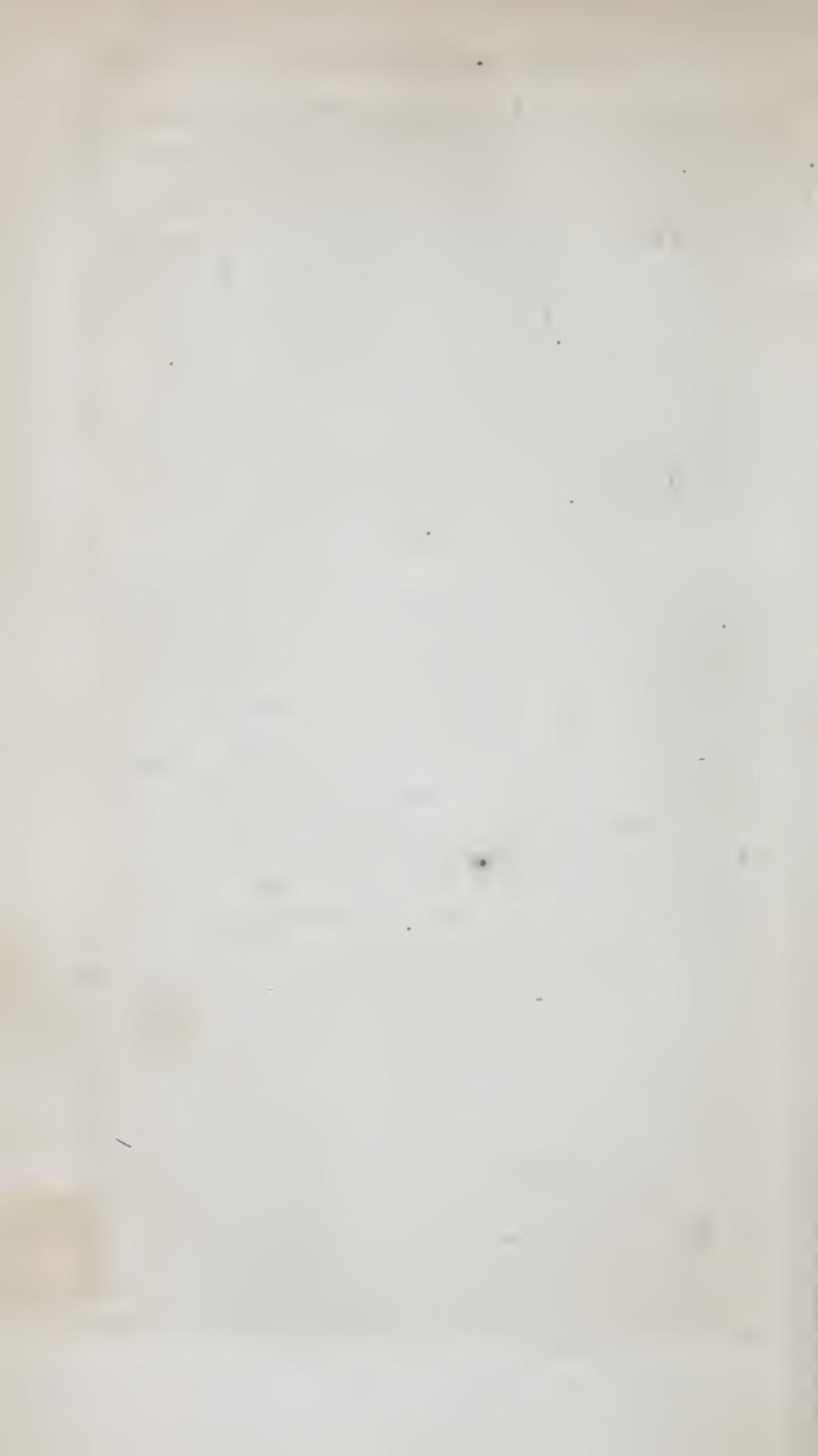
When our design was made known to the people about the place, they shook their heads, and maintained that it was impossible to gain the summit; while some of them seemed to look upon the attempt as an act of presumptuous temerity. They regard the mountain with a kind of superstitious veneration; and find it difficult to divest their minds of the idea, that it is still haunted by Bárdr, the tutelary divinity of the Yökul, who will not fail to avenge himself on all that have the audacity to desile, with mortal breath, the pure and ethereal atmosphere of his lofty abode.

After partaking of an excellent breakfast, and having completely equipped ourselves for the journey, we set out from Stappen at eight o'clock, the thermometer showing 52° in the shade. Our way lay nearly due north-east.



VIEW OF THE COAST NEAR STAPPEN.

Pendleton's Lithog. Boston



On our right we had a stream of lava, which we crossed repeatedly, and proceeded up the long gulley, down which it has flowed from the Yökul. Following this track, and surmounting alternate masses of snow and rough knobby lavas, we came, about ten o'clock, to the last black spot we could discover, a huge piece of lava, on which we rested ourselves for about a quarter of an hour, in order to gain strength for the remaining and more arduous part of our excursion.

What had greatly incommoded us hitherto, was the extreme softness of the snow. We sunk in it past the knees ; and though Mr. H. and I walked in the prints made by the three men, we found it nearly as fatiguing as if we had made a track each for himself.

We again renewed our ascent. The surface of the snow began to get more indurated, and though we still sunk too much to admit of our walking with ease, this inconvenience was in some measure counterbalanced by the gentleness with which the mountain rose before us. In the course of half an hour, however, the ascent became more acclivitous, and ultimately got so steep, that we were obliged to climb it in a zig-zag direction, and found it impossible to advance more than thirty or forty paces at a time, without throwing ourselves down on the snow, in order to refresh ourselves by a temporary respite. What is very remarkable, though we always felt so fatigued, that we supposed a considerable time would be required to render us vigorous again, we had not lain more than three minutes when we found ourselves as fresh and lively as ever. We now found the black silk handkerchiefs we had taken with us very useful, as the rays of the sun, reflected from the minute crystals of ice on the crust of the snow, proved extremely annoying, and must certainly have been hurtful to the organs of sight had we not used this precaution.

For some time we completely lost sight of the superior regions of the Yökul ; but as we continued our progress, the most easterly peak came at length in view, and appeared to be at no great elevation above us. It was not, however, till after we had repeatedly renewed our toil, that we reached its southern base, about one o'clock. The three minor peaks into which it is divided consist of

masses of congealed snow, supported by beautiful massive pillars of ice in front, which wear a brilliant green hue, and reflect the beams of the sun in the most vivid manner. We here halted near half an hour, and partook of some refreshment, after which we pursued our route towards the middle and highest peak.

The ascent now became much easier, owing to the consistence of the crust, and the more gentle rise of the mountain. The air increased in purity, and the heat sensibly declined. The mercury had fallen to  $33^{\circ}$ ; though there was a piercing sun, and little or no wind was perceptible.

About three o'clock, we ultimately succeeded in reaching the base of the highest peak, when, all at once, a most tremendous precipice appeared at our feet, exceeding 2000 feet of nearly perpendicular depth, and displaying, in various parts of the profound valley of snow into which it opened, long and broad fissures running parallel with its sides. Near the middle of this awful depth we espied a huge circular aperture, the sides of which were lined with green ice, and which seemed to have been formed by a cascade, poured down from some part of the snow-bank on which we stood, though we could not discover any marks of water. This wonderful chasm ran down from between the middle and most westerly peaks, and appeared to descend to near the northern base of the mountain. Skirting the brink of the frozen precipice, we ascended the north side of the peak, but, after climbing within three or four yards of its summit, we were debarred all further progress by a perpendicular wall of icy pillars, resembling those already described, and completely surrounding the summit, which we could reach with great ease with the end of the poles, or long walking staves in our hands.

We here formed a seat with our poles in the snow, and sat down to partake of a cold dinner, which tasted still colder from the ideas suggested by the scene around us, and the actual increase of cold in the atmosphere, the mercury having sunk to  $29^{\circ}$ . The mist that had partially encompassed the Yökul during our ascent, now completely encircled it, and prevented us from surveying the low coasts and harbors around the base of the mountain.

The prospect was, nevertheless, noble and commanding. What added to its interest, was the beautiful girdle of clouds which surrounded the Yökul, at least 3000 feet below us. The air felt uncommonly pure ; and the pleasurable sensations produced by the reflection that we had attained the object of our enterprize, in spite even of our own misgivings, tended, in no small degree, to cheer and exhilarate our minds.

On surveying such an immense snow mountain, it is impossible not to feel the force of the Scripture appeal : “ Will the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field ? or the inundating cold flowing waters be exhausted ? ” Jer. xviii. 14. Much less can HE fail, who is the Ancient of Days, and the Rock of Ages, the Fountain of living Waters, and the God of all comfort and consolation. Every sublunary object must undergo vicissitude and decay : the whole of the mundane system shall one day present a scene of universal ruin : but “ HE remaineth the same, and His years shall have no end.” Psalm cii. 27.

Having examined the compass, and found it exactly to correspond with the sun, we began to retrace our steps, which, from their depth, were plain before us, so that there was no danger of losing our way. We found the descent extremely easy ; and in little more than three hours from our leaving the summit of the Yökul, we again found ourselves at Stappen, where we were welcomed by the inhabitants ; but it was not till the following morning that the common people would believe the protestations of our attendants, that we had actually reached the middle peak.

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## CHAP. X.

Journey through the Syssel of Snæfellsness continued—Ennit—Olafsvik—Grundarfiord—Mode of Interment—Berserkia Lava and Cairn—Sticks-holm—Thorsness—Temple of Thor—Mode of Sacrificing, and Origin of Toasts—Helgafell—Ancient and Modern Hospitality of the Icelanders—Snoksdal.

I LEFT Stappen on the 26th, accompanied by Mr. Hialltalin, and proceeded round the Yökul, across some of the highest lavas to be met with on the island. The stage might be about twenty-four miles, yet we had scarcely any thing but lava the whole day.

At seven in the evening we arrived at the farm occupied by Mr. Scheving, the administrator of the royal domains in this part of the island. Before retiring to rest, I had a visit from the clergyman, who informed me, that in the two parishes forming his charge are nearly 1000 souls, a disproportion which arises from the number of fishing hamlets, whose inhabitants depend entirely on the produce of the sea. They are in general very poor; and, from every account, it would appear, that, in point of moral character, they are far behind those who confine their attention to the management of their flocks. Being often prevented from going to sea by the prevalence of stormy weather, they contract a habit of idleness, in the train of which, drunkenness, impurity, and other vices, but too commonly follow. These evils have of late increased to such a degree in the Syssel of Snæfellsness, that those in power found themselves obliged to interfere, and call the offenders to account; but connivance, partiality, and the want of cordial and persevering co-operation, have rendered the measures abortive that were designed to effect a reformation of manners. Upwards of thirty Bibles, and

a number of New Testaments, had been sold at this place.

On the 27th, I again set out, in company with the two daughters of the administrator, the clergyman, and Mr. Hialltalin, who would not leave me till we reached Olafsvik. The ladies, dressed in their Sunday habit, were lifted on their ponies, and galloped away, apparently as little intimidated as the ladies in the neighborhood of the Don. Their saddles were surrounded by a strong rim behind, over which hung an elegant coverlet, exhibiting some fine specimens of embroidery. The road was at first rather boggy, but we soon gained the sand which forms the beach, and advanced with considerable speed till we reached the base of a huge projecting mountain called Ennit, when we were obliged to alight, and suffer our horses to find the road as well as they could, across the large stones that have been dislodged on the beach.

The pass at this place is justly considered to be one of the most dangerous in Iceland. The mountain is about 2500 feet in height, presenting the most rugged and frightful appearance imaginable. The sea having eat away a considerable part of its base, numerous holes and caverns present themselves; and its sides being perpendicular, there is no possibility of passing it except at low water, and even then the sea only recedes to a short distance; so that though the traveller keeps close to the water, he still runs great risk of being crushed to atoms by the stones falling from the mountain. Numbers have actually lost their lives here; and many of the natives prefer a long circuitous route along the south side of the peninsula to this short but difficult pass. It was not without impressions of terror that I ventured below the beetling cliffs, many of which appeared to be almost entirely disengaged from the mountain; and my anxiety was greatly increased on witnessing the stones that had tumbled down during the ebb. However, as the ladies proceeded without intimidation, it would have argued a great want of fortitude not to have followed.

About noon we reached Olafsvik, a factory belonging to Mr. Clausen, and were hospitably entertained by his factor. It consists of two very respectable dwelling-houses, several warehouses, and a number of small Ice-

landic hamlets that lie at different distances behind the place. I here fell in with the Dean of the Syssel, the very Reverend Mr. Thorgrimson, who had proceeded this length on a visitation. It was with much regret I learned this circumstance, as I had laid my account with spending the Lord's day at his place, and hearing him preach. He is considered to be one of the more able preachers in the island, and is one of the few who deliver their discourses from memory :—it being almost universally the custom with the clergy to read their sermons, which deprives them of that life and energy which generally accompany the address of an unshackled speaker. My regret was augmented the longer I was in his company ; for I found him to be a truly serious man, sedate and deliberate in his turn of mind, of considerable learning, and possessing sound ideas on the grand fundamental articles of the Christian faith. What he said was always well weighed, and expressed in the most appropriate words. He soon took an opportunity of expressing his approbation of the exertions now making for the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, and his gratitude for what had been done for the inhabitants of his Deanery in particular. It was entirely out of his power to return with me, as he had an appointment for the following day ; but he had the kindness to accompany me about four miles along the coast to the fishing village of Völlum, where we parted, after mutually wishing each other the divine blessing and protection.

From the fine road along the beach, which I travelled with ease and pleasure, I had soon to mount a horrid pass, which, in point of difficulty and danger, may almost vie with that of Ennit. The mountain is nearly 2000 feet high : its front presents several horizontal strata of tuffa, and vertical pillars of basaltic rock, to the depth of about 200 feet, when a bed of debris commences, and falls with a rapid descent to the brink of the lofty precipices which gird the sea at the base of the mountain.

The only road which it is possible to pass lies up across this debris, and rises at the highest to nearly 1000 feet above the level of the sea, which dashes with tremendous roar almost directly below the traveller. The road itself we found in some places invisible ; recent depositions of

gravel from the impending rocks having obliterated it, and every step the horses took threatened us with inevitable destruction, as they had no secure footing, and there was no manner of barrier to prevent us from rolling into the abyss. Our principal difficulty, however, was occasioned by a deep indentation cut by the mountain torrent, which was nearly full of frozen snow, in crossing which, one of the baggage-horses missed a foot, and sliding down upon the ice, I must have given him up for lost, had he not gained a heap of debris, which held him with difficulty till he was caught by the servant, and drawn up again into the path. On proceeding along this dangerous route, most of the Icelanders walk behind their horses, holding them by the tails, and taking care not to look down into the sea.

Having gained the summit of the pass, we again began to descend on the other side, admiring the grandeur of the mountain scenery which here presented itself to our view. Directly before us lay the Coffin and Sugar-loaf, so called from their striking resemblance to these objects, and to our right projected a number of bold and precipitous mountains, whose curiously diversified forms seemed to mock the works of art, and whose sides wore evident marks of primitive formation ; for how much soever they were divided, the sites of the horizontal beds, of which they are composed, exactly corresponded to each other.

At nine o'clock in the evening I arrived at Grundarfjord. Owing to the stony nature of the ground, I had some difficulty in getting my tent pitched ; and in the course of the night it was nearly blown down, by sudden and violent squalls from the adjacent mountains. About five in the morning, I was alarmed by a noise louder than thunder, which seemed to be close to the tent ; and on drawing aside the curtain, I found that a disruption had taken place in the face of a mountain at no great distance. The air was nearly darkened with the quantity of dust that was borne upwards by the wind, and immense masses of rock were hurled down, tearing the ground as they rolled along, and, giving a fresh impulse to the rocks and gravel that had already fallen, the whole rushed down with amazing velocity into the plain.

The 28th being the Lord's day, I rode to the church of

Setberg, which lies on the east side of the bay, and is the residence of the Dean. I was here received by one of his daughters, who instantly presented me with coffee, and the chaplain bade me welcome to the place. Before the commencement of public worship some time was taken up with a funeral. It is the custom in Iceland to remove the corpse as soon as possible to church, where it is suffered to remain till the day of interment. When a person happens to die in the vicinity of the church, he is wrapped in wadmel, and placed on a bench beside the altar, till a coffin can be got ready. Formerly the coffin was placed on a sledge drawn by oxen ; but as this mode of conveyance is entirely out of use at the present day, the Icelanders now carry it on horseback, as the Jews did the body of Amaziah. "And they brought him on horses : and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David." 2 Kings, xiv. 20. In the winter season, interments are attended with considerable difficulty ; as it takes three or four people a whole day to dig a grave, owing to the depth of the frost. In many parts of the island, where the people are at a distance from any church, they preserve the corpse the whole winter in a cellar, and inter it the following spring.

The funeral service begins with a psalm, which is sung while the procession advances towards the grave ; the men having their heads uncovered, and the females covering their faces almost entirely with their handkerchiefs. After the coffin has been deposited in the grave, the priest throws three shovels full of earth upon it, repeating the words : "From dust thou art taken ; to dust thou shalt return ; and from the dust shalt thou rise again at the last day." While the grave is filling, the company sing a psalm or two suited to the occasion. One of the servants belonging to the farm whence the corpse had been brought, entered the grave after a small portion of earth had been thrown in, and continued to tramp it down with his feet :—an action that naturally produced a very abhorrent feeling in my mind, and added to the common but perhaps unjust prejudice that is entertained against those whose lot it is to perform the last offices of humanity. The females knelt, in the mean time, on the surrounding graves ; and when all was finished, the father of the de-

ceased threw himself prostrate on the grave, and continued in that posture for the space of eight or ten minutes; but whether his prayer regarded the soul of the departed, or the important uses to be made of this solemn event by the living, was more than I could determine.

The discourse of the chaplain, which turned on a future state of retribution, was plain and edifying; and the sacramental table was crowded with communicants, who appeared to be deeply affected by the solemn exercise in which they were engaged.

In the evening I received a visit from the Sysselman, who gave me an account of the steps that had been taken for facilitating the distribution of the Scriptures, and he assured me that nothing should be left undone that might carry the views of the Society into effect.

Monday, the 29th, I bade farewell to my kind entertainers, and prosecuted my journey towards the east, under the guidance of the Sysselman. On passing Setberg we were joined by the chaplain, and rode on to the former dwelling of the Sysselman, where we were treated with coffee by the present occupant of the farm. Here we stopped for my two companions to shoe one of their horses, a task that all the Icelanders are capable of performing, and which none of them thinks beneath his dignity.

In the course of the day we encountered the famous arm called the *Berserkia lava*, from the path and fence that were laid across it by two Swedes of gigantic prowess, towards the close of the tenth century.\* When we had

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\* The narrative of the circumstances connected with this singular transaction is preserved in *Eyrbyggia Saga*, the substance of which has lately been given to the British public by Walter Scott, Esq. As it will convey to the reader a fair specimen of the Sagas, I shall here insert his translation, only taking the liberty to alter a phrase or two, in order to render it more conformable to the original.

"While Vermund Miofi, of Biarnarhafn, a harbor in the vicinity, spent a winter with Count Hacon, at that time regent of Norway, there happened to be at the court two of those remarkable champions, called Berserkir; men who, by moral or physical excitation of some kind or other, were wont to work themselves into a state of phrensy, during which they achieved deeds passing human strength, and rushed, without sense of danger, or feeling of pain, upon every species of danger that could be opposed to them. Vermund contracted a sort of friendship with these champions, who, unless when seized with their fits of fury, were not altogether discourteous or evil disposed. But as any contradiction was apt to excite their stormy passions, their company could not be called very safe or commodious. Vermund, however, who

gained the highest part of the lava, I obtained a view of the fences running completely across it; and in some places apparently of considerable height. The path itself is the best I have seen through any lava in Iceland. Its formation has certainly been accompanied with immense labor; and little short of what we fancy the strength of a

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now desired to return to Iceland, conceived that the support of the two Berserkir would be of the greatest advantage to him, as they would enable him to control his brother, who had acted unjustly towards him in regard to his patrimony; and, therefore, when, at his departure, Count Hacon, according to custom, offered him any reasonable boon which he might require, he prayed that he would permit these two champions to accompany him to his native country. The Count assented, but not without showing him the danger of his request. "Though they have rendered me obedient service," said Hacon, "they will be reluctant and disobedient stipendiaries to a person of meaner station." Vermund, however, grasped at the permission of the Count, though reluctantly granted, and was profuse in promises to Halli and Leiknir, providing they would accompany him to Iceland. They frankly objected the poverty of the country, yet agreed to go thither, apprising their conductor at the same time, that their friendship would not endure long, if he refused them any boon which it was in his power to grant, and which they might choose to demand. Having finally agreed, they set sail for Iceland; but Vermund soon found reason to repent of his choice, and began to think of transferring his troublesome and ungovernable satellites to his brother Arngrim, who was surnamed Styr, on account of his fierce and quarrelsome disposition. It was no easy matter, however, to prevail upon Styr to accept of the patronage of the Berserkir. In vain Vermund protested that he gifted him with two such champions as would enable him to become an easy victor in every quarrel he might engage in; and that he designed this present as a gage of their fraternal union. Styr expressed his happiness at the prospect of their becoming better friends; but intimated, that he had heard enough of the disposition of these foreign warriors to satisfy him, that they would be rather embarrassing than useful dependants, and was fully determined never to admit them within his family. Vermund was, therefore, obliged to change his tone; to acknowledge the dread in which he stood of the Berserkir, and request his brother's advice and assistance to rid him of them. "That," answered Styr, "is a different proposal. I could never have accepted them as a pledge of favor or friendship; but, to relieve thee from danger and difficulty, I am content to encumber myself with the charge of thine associates." The next point was to reconcile the Berserkir, (who might resent being transferred, like bondmen, from the one brother to the other,) to this change of masters. The warlike and fierce disposition of Styr, seemed, however, so much more suitable to their own than that of Vermund, that they speedily acquiesced; and accompanying their new patron upon a nocturnal expedition, evinced their strength in breaking to pieces a strong wooden frame or bed, in which his enemy had taken refuge, so that Styr had an opportunity of slaying him.

"The presumption of Halli, however, soon discomposed their union. The champion cast the eyes of affection on Aslisa, the daughter of his patron, a young, haughty, fiery, and robust damsel, well qualified to captivate the heart of a Berserk. He formally announced to Styr, that he demanded her hand in marriage; that a refusal would be a breach of their friendship; but that if he would accept of his alliance, he and his brother would render him the most powerful man in Iceland. At this unexpected proposal, Styr for a time remained silent, considering how best he might evade the presumptuous

giant, would be required to move many of the masses of lava that have been raised on either side. About the middle of the tract we descended into a deep glen, where we found the *Berserkia-dis*, or the cairn beneath which the Berserkir lie interred. It is situated on the north side

demand of this frantic champion ; and at length observed, that the friends of his family must be consulted upon his daughter's establishment. "Three days' space," answered Halli, "will suffice for that purpose ; and be mindful that our friendship depends on thine answer." Next morning, Styr rode to Helgafell, to consult the experience of the Pontiff Snorro. When Snorro learned that he came to ask advice, "Let us ascend," he said, "the sacred mount, for such counsels as are taken on that holy spot rarely prove unpropitious." They remained in deep conference on the mount of Thor until evening, nor did any one know the purpose which they agitated ; but what followed sufficiently shows the nature of the counsels suggested upon the holy ground. Styr, so soon as he returned home, announced to Halli his expectation, that since he could not redeem his bride by payment of a sum of money as was usual, he should substitute in lieu thereof, according to ancient right and custom, the performance of some unusual and difficult task. "And what shall that task be ?" demanded the suitor.—"Thou shalt form," said Styr, "a path across the lava to Biarnarhafn, and a fence between my pasture-grounds and those of my neighbors ; also, thou shalt construct a house on this side of the lava for the reception of my flocks, and these tasks accomplished, thou shalt have Asdisa to wife."—"Though unaccustomed to such servile toil," replied the Berserk, "I accept of the terms thou hast offered." And by the assistance of his brother, he accomplished the path required, a work of the most stupendous masculine labor, and erected the bound-fence, which may be seen at this day ; and while they were laboring at the stable for the flocks, Styr caused his servants to construct a subterranean bath, so contrived, that it could on a sudden be deluged with boiling water, and heated to a suffocating degree.

"The stipulated task being ended, the champions returned to the dwelling of Styr. They were extremely exhausted, as was common with persons of their condition, whose profuse expenditure of strength and spirits induced a proportional degree of relaxation after severe labor. They, therefore, gladly accepted Styr's proposal, that they should occupy the newly-constructed bath. When they had entered, their insidious patron caused the trap-door to be locked, and a newly stript bullock's skin to be laid on the stair, and then proceeded to pour in scalding water through a window above the stove, so that the bath was heated to an intolerable pitch. The unfortunate Berserkir endeavored to break out, and Halli succeeded in forcing the door, but his feet being entangled in the slippery hide, he was stabbed by Styr, ere he could make any defence : his brother attempting the entrance, was forced back headlong into the bath, and thus both perished. Styr caused their bodies to be interred in a glen in the lava, close to the road, and of such depth that nothing but the sky was visible from its recesses. Then Styr composed this song concerning his exploit :

"These champions from beyond the main,  
Of Iceland's sons I deem'd the bane,  
Nor fear'd I to endure the harm  
And frantic fury of their arm ;  
But, conqueror, gave this valley's gloom  
To be the grim Berserkir's tomb."

*Eyrbyggia Saga*, caps. xxv. and xxviii. and *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, pp. 489—492.

of the road, and may be about twenty feet in length, six in breadth, and four in height. It consists of larger stones towards the base ; but the superior regions are made up of small stones that have been thrown upon it, from time to time, by those that have passed this way.

At the termination of the lava, my guide pointed out to me the cottage of Hraun, which was inhabited by Styr, and several other places mentioned in the Saga. He had the story completely by heart, and finding that I took some degree of interest in the scenery, he proceeded to relate the different circumstances, in a strain of eloquence that perfectly astonished me ; nor is it easy to say when his national enthusiasm might have been arrested, had we not arrived at the farm of Kongsbacka, where I pitched my tent under the lee of the house, and was kindly treated by the inhabitants.

Early in the morning of the 30th, I set off for the factory of Stickesholm, to reach which it was necessary for me to turn a number of small bays and creeks, which protrude between that place and the rest of the peninsula. The intervening grounds form the small peninsula of Thorsness, famous for its having been dedicated to Thor, the Scandinavian deity, and the cruel rites of a bloody superstition, which continued to be practised here until the introduction of Christianity.\*

\* The following description of the nature of Scandinavian idolatry, from the pen of Snorro Sturluson, will not only remind the reader of 1 Corinth. viii. and x. 14—33, but show him the origin of health-drinking as it is still practised in different countries of Europe :

"It was an ancient custom, when sacrifice was to be offered, that the whole community assembled at the temple, and brought with them whatever they needed during the feast. It was also particularly ordained, that every man should have ale in his possession. On such occasions, they not only killed all kinds of small cattle, but also horses. With the blood of these, they sprinkled all the supporters of the idols, and the walls of the temple both externally and internally, as also the people that were assembled, with the blood of the sacrifices ; but the flesh was boiled and used for food. In the middle of the floor of the temple was a fire, over which kettles were suspended, and full cups were borne round the fire to the guests. It was the office of the pontiff, or the master of the feast, to bless the cup and all the meat offered in sacrifice. The first bumper (Icel. *full*, a full cup) was drunk to *Odin*, for victory in battle, and the prosperity of his government ; the second and third were drunk to *Niord* and *Frey*, for peace and good seasons ; after which many drank the toast of the mighty heroes who had fallen in battle. They also drank a bumper in memory of such of their deceased relations as had distinguished themselves by some great action."

On the introduction of Christianity into the north, the names of *Odin*, *Frey*, &c. were laid aside, and the health of *Christ* and the saints was drunk by

About noon, I arrived at the parsonage of Helgafell, where I was received by the chaplain, in whose house I found one of the best libraries that I recollect having seen in the hands of any private clergyman on the island. He had but lately come to this place, and was busy fitting up his furniture. The rector himself is almost superannuated, though by no means an old man. The present church of Helgafell owes its erection to his mechanical genius; all the carpenter-work having been accomplished with his own hands.

Stickesholm consists of two merchants' houses, with the warehouses belonging to them, and the dwelling-house of Mr. Hialltalin, the surgeon of the district. The principal merchant is Mr. Benedictson, a native Icelander, who has distinguished himself from all the other merchants on the island by his literary pursuits, and especially by his attachment to northern antiquities, with which he possesses a very intimate acquaintance. His collection of Icelandic MSS. is considerable. He possesses several copies of the more important sagas, which he is comparing together, and writing out a fair copy of the text, accompanied with the most established readings. His zeal for the transmission of these ancient documents to posterity, has induced him to form the resolution of bequeathing the collection to his eldest son, with the stipulation, that it be bequeathed again by him in the same manner, so as to form the perpetual property of the family.

On entering his shop, I was happy to recognise a number of Bibles and New Testaments advantageously exposed for sale. A quantity of copies had been gratuitously distributed, and received with great thankfulness; and Mr. B. expected that the sale at the ensuing summer-market would be considerable, as the greatest want of the Scriptures prevailed in the district. By Mr. and Madame Benedictson, as also by Mr. and Madame Hialltalin, I was treated in the most polite and hospitable manner. Indeed,

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the new converts—a custom which was long kept up in these parts of Europe. We are told by Snorro, that when King Svein gave a splendid feast to the *Jomsvikinga* chiefs, previous to his ascension to the throne, he first of all drank a cup to the memory of his father; after which he proposed the health of Christ, which they all drank; then the health of St. Michael, &c.

the two families seemed to vie with one another which of them should be most unremitting in their attentions.

On the 1st of June, I reached Narfeyri. I had scarcely got dressed the following morning, when the farmer made his appearance at the tent-door, and presented me with some excellent eider-duck eggs, my cheerful acceptance of which appeared to give him great satisfaction. He seemed also much pleased on my telling him that he must certainly be a descendant of Geirrid—a matron who lived in the vicinity soon after the occupation of the island, and was possessed of so hospitable a disposition, that she caused her habitation to be erected on the road, so that every traveller was obliged to pass through it, and invited to take some refreshment at a table which she always kept covered on purpose.\* Two or three examples of a similar nature are recorded in the Sagas, which prove that hospitality was not a poetic fiction, but a virtue of high repute, and in common practice among the ancient inhabitants of the north.

From Narfeyri I rode in an easterly direction to Breidabolstad, where I spent the remainder of the day in a very agreeable manner with the Rev. Mr. Hialltalin, of whom Sir George Mackenzie has given so favorable a description in his Travels. He possesses a good turn for sacred poetry, and has written a considerable number of theological works, which are still lying by him in manuscript, there not being any opportunity of publishing them. Of these, the most important is a translation of Bastholm's Jewish History, which would be read with avidity, could it only be put into the hands of the natives. Mr. H. is now advancing in years, and with a large family of children combines but a small living; yet he seems uncommonly lively and cheerful in his disposition.

The 4th of June, being the Lord's day, I had an opportunity of attending worship at Snoksdal. The congregation was pretty numerous, and manifested much seriousness and piety in the exercises of devotion. The prayers and discourse too of the chaplain savored of a deeper sense of religion than any I had yet heard on the island. Instead of a few general petitions, pronounced

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\* *Eyrbyggia Saga*, cap. viii.

in a cold and uninteresting manner, he offered up a prayer, in which a full and explicit confession was made of sin ; its forgiveness implored, in virtue of the atonement of the Mediator ; and a full supply of those blessings supplicated, of which himself and his hearers stood in need. The Psalms were taken from the old Psalm-book ; and while the congregation sung an Icelandic translation of one of the early confessions, I almost fancied myself in some Christian church of the fourth or fifth century ; or in one of the Syrian churches in India, so interestingly described by the late Dr. Buchanan in his *Christian Researches*.

## CHAP. XI.

Journey through the Syssels of Dala, Bardastrand, and Isafjord—Hvam—Kampur—Domestic Scene—Reykiaholar—Breidasfjord and its Islands—Eider Ducks—Flatey—Hergisley—Effects of Drunkenness—Hrafnsseyri—Foxes—Holtt—Return—Superstition—Saudlauksdal—Sturturbrand—Gilsfjord—Raudsey—Skard.

IN the forenoon of Monday, the 5th of June, I got the farmer of Snoksdal to accompany me to Hiardarholtt, the residence of the Dean, in our way to which we had to pass two formidable rivers, Haukadalsâ and Laxâ, both of which had been unfordable for several days, and we found the latter still swelled, and rolling along with great rapidity.

I had now to cross several of the long dales which give the name to the Syssel, most of which produce excellent pasturage; and the low hills by which they are separated from each other are overgrown for the most part with coarse grass, heath, or stunted birch.

The Dean I found to be an aged man of seventy-seven. He expressed great satisfaction at the new supply of Bibles that had been provided for his countrymen. His investigation had just been completed, from which it appeared that the greatest want of the inspired volume existed in the Dales. Having given him an order on Mr. Benedictsson of Stickesholm for the requisite number of copies, and partaken of some refreshment, I pursued my journey to the church of Hvam, where I arrived about six in the evening.

Hvam is famous as the birth place of Snorro Sturluson, the celebrated northern historian. It was long occupied by a succession of mighty chiefs, the relics of whose authority are still visible in an octagonal mound, called

the Lögretta, where they were accustomed to administer justice among their dependants.

The incumbent, Sira Jon Gislason, received me in the kindest manner; and I soon recognised in him a deep sense of religion, and a spirit and manners truly apostolic. We spent the remainder of the evening in religious conversation, in which he took the most lively interest. Indeed, I anticipated this immediately on entering his room, as the Bible he had just been reading was still lying on the table.

On our way to the next farm, we had to cross a river repeatedly by means of snow bridges, many of which were of no great thickness. The quantity of snow we encountered in our descent was immense. It never melts, but accumulates from year to year; and there is every reason to suppose that it will ultimately become a Yökul.

Leaving this cold and cheerless tract, we entered a valley that strikes off from its termination in a westerly direction; at first narrow, rocky, and sterile, but gradually opening into an extensive marshy plain. From the isthmus to the north of this plain, a central chain of mountains extends through the whole of the north-west peninsula, and shooting forward collateral branches from its sides, it receives a number of large bays from the circumjacent ocean. The road lies across these mountains; but though the season was considerably advanced, the quantity of snow that filled their gulleys rendered them absolutely impenetrable, so that I was obliged to abandon the idea of reaching the most distant Syssels by that route. By the advice of my kind friend, who had accompanied me from Hvam, I left my horses and the greater part of my baggage at the farm of Hvol, the peasant to whom it belongs engaging to proceed with me as far as Reykianess, from which place I was to make the tour of the islands in the Breidafjord.

About eleven o'clock at night I set off with my conductor, a middle aged man, of a good natural understanding, and clear and serious views of divine truth, in order to reach a difficult pass at the base of the mountains before the return of the tide in the Gilsfjord. This bay runs far up into the peninsula, but is of no great breadth.

It is bounded by precipitous mountains on either side, from which numerous disruptions are incessantly taking place, so that the road is neither safe nor easy. At two o'clock we gained the end of the bay, where we found two small solitary cottages. Here winter still maintained his benumbing sway. The most of the ground was covered with snow, and only a few patches of vegetation appeared in the immediate vicinity of the houses. The mercury stood two degrees below the freezing point.

Passing the church of Garpsdal, we pursued our course along the shore, and arrived about six in the morning at the small farm of Kampur, where I resolved to enjoy a few hours' sleep.

Having left my tent and bedding at Hvol, I was now under the necessity of choosing an Icelandic bed, which, I must confess, I did not like, on more accounts than one; but as my fatigue was excessive, I was the more easily reconciled to my situation. I was shown into an out-house, while the mistress of the farm made up a bed for me in the sleeping apartment, to which I soon repaired, through a dark passage, from which a few steps led me into my chamber. The most of the family being still in bed, raised themselves nearly erect, naked as they were, to behold the early and strange visitor. Though almost suffocated for want of air, I should soon have fallen asleep, had it not been for an universal scratching that took place in all the beds in the room, which greatly excited my fears, notwithstanding the new and cleanly appearance of the wadmel on which I lay. At one period of the operation, the noise was, seriously speaking, paramount to that made by a groom in combing down his horses. Ultimately, however, every disagreeable emotion was stilled by the balmy power of sleep, and I enjoyed, for five hours, the soundest repose I ever had in my life.

Both the peasant and his wife were uncommonly frank and loquacious. They had numerous questions to put to me about England, and the situation of our farmers, which it required no small ingenuity to answer consistently with truth, and yet so as not to make my entertainers feel the vast inferiority of their own circumstances. I generally availed myself of the introduction of this topic, which often happened during my peregrinations in Iceland, to

remark, that to creatures of a day, any difference of external condition is but of small moment; and that the grand point is to enjoy an interest in the Divine favor, and an assured hope, founded on a sense of that interest, that when this short and uncertain life terminates, we shall receive an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Such observations were always well received, and seldom failed to elicit corresponding sentiments. I could not but notice the manner in which my hostess spake of her children. On my inquiring how many she had, her reply was, "I have four. Two of them are here with us, and the other two are with God. It is best with those that are with him; and my chief concern about the two that remain is, that they may reach heaven in safety." Being the first foreigner the family had ever seen, they were much struck with my appearance, and put me down for a *Höfdingi*, or chief; though, in my native country, I should rather, from the appearance of my dress, have passed for a pedlar. They had no copy of the Bible, but rejoiced in the prospect of soon obtaining one.

My next stage was Reykiaholar, where the stormy weather compelled me to remain till the morning of the 9th, when, with much difficulty, I procured four men and two women to row me over to the island of Flatey, about twenty miles distant from the promontory of Reykianess. As the weather was fine, I had a most agreeable passage among the innumerable small islands that cover this part of the bay, most of which appear to have been thrown up by submarine volcanoes, and many of them rest on superb perpendicular pillars of basaltic rock. The theory of the volcanic origin of these islands is corroborated by the numerous hot springs which exist not only on many of the holms themselves, but also in the sea around them. At one of the fishing stations, there is a hot-spring considerably within high water mark, and another nearer the holm, which is so hot that eggs may be boiled in it. These springs are of great use to the fishermen, as they supply them with plenty of fresh water, which is otherwise not to be found in the neighborhood. Near Sandey is another curious spring in the middle of a rock, which is visible at low water, boiling with violence, and splash-

ing its contents around the basin. It possesses the power of incrustation, and the margin is entirely covered with a white crust.

Most of the islands are covered with grass, which is made into hay at the proper season by the inhabitants; but they are chiefly valuable on account of the immense flocks of sea-fowl by which they are frequented. As I passed through between them, my ears were stunned with the cries of the sea-parrots and crees, the latter of which abounded in such numbers, that they completely covered the surface of the water, and on rising, almost darkened the atmosphere.

When about half way to Flatey, we landed on a small holm, when I had an opportunity of witnessing the surprising tameness of the eider-ducks, whose nests lay scattered in great profusion about my feet. On approaching them, the drake always took the alarm, and plunged with great precipitancy into the water; but the duck generally kept sitting on her nest, or merely flew to the distance of a yard or two, and on my attempting to touch the eggs, returned in a rage, and, with very significant signs, gave me to understand, that nature had invested her with an undisputed right to the property. Many of them suffered me to stroke them, and could only be thrust with violence from the nest. In some parts of Iceland, the eider-ducks build their nests on the roofs of the houses, and become quite familiar with the inhabitants. The nests are constructed of sea weeds, and lined with the finest down, plucked from the breast of the fowls. As soon as the natives observe that the first eggs are laid, they remove them, robbing the nest at the same time of the down; and this cruel experiment they repeat a second or third time; but it is generally found, that if they are robbed more than twice, they begin to desert the place, and if pillaged oftener, they quit it entirely.

A few days after the young ducks leave the egg, they proceed to the water, under the guidance of their dam, who swims with them on her back to some distance, when, making a sudden dive, she abandons them to themselves, and, reappearing, tempts them to swim towards her, so that on the first trial they commonly become expert swimmers. When the breeding season is over, they

generally stand out to sea ; yet numbers are seen the whole winter frequenting the creeks and bays about the coast. The eggs furnish excellent food to the inhabitants, and the down sells high to the merchant, by whom it is sent to different parts of the continent, where it is used for beds.

The sea-parrots dig holes in the sand, like rabbits, and build their nests at the depth of two or three yards below the surface of the ground. They are caught by means of a hook fastened to the end of a stick ; and, what is singular, when one is dragged out, his companions take hold of him, and endeavor to retain him, by which means they are often caught to the number of three or four at a time.

About six o'clock in the evening, I landed on the island of Flatey. The island is only about a mile in circumference ; yet it is better inhabited than many of the contiguous islands, and has a good church, and a mercantile establishment of some importance. The clergyman, Sira Thomas, is obliged to follow the original employment of Zebedee's children, and is particularly dexterous in catching seals. His official duties are perhaps the most perilous, as well as the most laborious of any in the Icelandic church : as he has two parishes, one of which comprehends the islanders, and the other lies on the mainland, at the distance of ten or twelve miles from Flatey. Scarcely a winter passes in which his life is not in danger, owing to the difficulties connected with the passage of the different sounds on the ice. Yet for all this service, he is only rewarded with a miserable pittance, and is obliged to devote the most of his time to fishing, in order to provide for the maintenance of his family.

The copies of the Scriptures that have been forwarded to this harbor had all been disposed of, owing to the zeal and activity of the Sysselman, who had taken them along with him for distribution at the different courts which he had held during the summer circuit. As the farmers must all attend these courts, a more convenient and expeditious mode of circulation could not have been adopted.

Having rested about three hours on Flatey, I again embarked for the mainland in the boat of the clergyman of Briânlslæk, who is obliged to act the part of ferryman between the two places. About three o'clock in the morning we arrived at Hergilsey, a beautiful basaltic

island, covered with rich grass, and inhabited by several peasants. We put in here for the purpose of resting the women that had plied at the oar, and proceeded to one of the houses, where the clergyman assured me of a welcome reception, although the whole family were now immersed in sleep. His prediction was soon accomplished ; one of the women having wakened the landlady, who instantly provided us with plenty of eider-duck eggs and coffee. This island is frequented by the eider-duck in such numbers, that I had great difficulty, in walking about on the heights, to avoid trampling on their nests. The columns of basalt are most stately on the north side ; and, being irregularly broken, they present to the eye of the imagination some of the most striking resemblances of oriental ruins that can possibly be conceived.

One of the passengers having drunk too much spirituous liquor at the factory, we had been under the necessity of leaving him in the boat to the care of his servant, who was perfectly sober ; but what was our surprise, when we returned from the farm, to find that during our absence the servant had availed himself of his master's indisposition, and applied very freely to a brandy jar that had been left in the boat, the consequence of which was, that on attempting to leave it, he had plunged into the sea, and his master being incapable of rendering him any assistance, he must instantly have drowned, had we not arrived the moment we did. Having got him up again into the boat, the Icelanders were determined to set off with him, but on my assuring them he would die of cold, they agreed to leave him on the island, and carried him on a barrow to the farm. Hospitality was now succeeded by compassion ; the patient had his wet clothes taken off, and was put into a warm bed, and every thing was done that could contribute to his restoration ; but the shock he had received was too severe for his weak habit of body, and he expired in less than two days. What a confirmation, even in a temporal point of view, of that Scripture, which saith, “The wages of sin is death !” He had travelled over the most of the continent of Europe, made a voyage or two to the East Indies, and weathered the storms of more than fourscore years ; and now at last, on his native shores, he dies like a fool “for want of wisdom.”

Drinking is certainly a vice by no means common among

the natives of Iceland. Neither their means nor their opportunities admit of their indulging in it to the same extent with the inhabitants of other countries; yet it cannot be denied, that the factories sometimes present scenes of drunkenness, when the peasants repair thither for the purposes of trade; though even then it is not so much the quantity of liquor they drink, as their being unaccustomed to the use of it, that occasions this temporary derangement.

From Hergilsey we had a pleasant row of about five hours to Briânslæk. My route now lay west along the coast, many parts of which display immense walls of basaltic configuration, running like artificial divisions to the length of several miles. The mountains exhibit some very extensive strata of the same kind of rock, with different other beds, all laid with the most perfect regularity.

On leaving Bildudal, (my first station after returning from the islands,) I had quitted a house distinguished for hospitality, in which I might have expected every thing that could in any way contribute to my comfort and refreshment; and now entering the Syssel of Isaiford, the most northerly on the island, I landed at a place entirely unknown to me, and where it was very problematical what kind of reception I should meet with. However, my favorable prepossession of the hospitable disposition of the Icelanders in general encouraged me to proceed. At eleven o'clock I arrived at the church and parsonage of Hrafnseyri, where I was agreeably surprised to find a Latin inscription above the door of the dwelling house, of the following import :

“ Be peace and rest to all that enter here,  
And when they leave may health their journey cheer.”

The flow of good spirits, however, which this animating inscription excited was in a great measure damped by the distressed state of the family; the clergyman having been nearly killed by a disruption from a neighboring mountain having overtaken him while climbing in search of a fox's den, and, carrying him along with it, he was left half buried in the midst of the debris. Had not one of his servants accidentally discovered the spot where he lay, he must have perished in this condition. His head and face were much fractured, and his limbs sadly man-

gled ; however, by the great attention of his family, together with the best mode of cure they could adopt, he was again in a fair way of recovery.

The foxes are very numerous in Iceland, and commit great depredations among the sheep. They are of two kinds ; the one white, and the other of a variegated brown color. They attack the strongest wethers, and when they cannot kill them instantly, they take them by the wool, and suffer themselves to be dragged till the sheep get tired, when they seize them by the throat, and drink their blood. It is no uncommon thing for a peasant to lose twenty or thirty sheep in this way in the course of a year.

They are besieged in their dens, shot, and caught in traps ; yet it is found impossible wholly to exterminate them. When the fox happens to be caught by the foot in a gin, he gnaws off his leg without scruple, and then limps away to his den. That he possesses his proverbial cunning also on this island is obvious, from what is related by the inhabitants. On discovering a flock of sea-gulls sitting about the shore, he approaches them backwards, with his tail raised so as to resemble one of themselves ; and as it is commonly white, and he advances with slow steps, they seldom discover the intrigue until he has reached them, when he is sure to seize one of them for his prey. In the winter he scrapes up the snow to the windward, and blinds them, so that they are completely taken at unawares.

*June 11.* There was no service at this place, owing to the indisposition of the clergyman ; but as I was informed there would be a sermon at Sand, a church on the north side of the mountains, I resolved to proceed to that place, and was accompanied by a young man, whose conversation proved in the highest degree interesting and agreeable. He had never been at any school, yet he had read the whole of the Greek Testament, several books of the Iliad, and a number of the Latin classics. We had also a robust female in our train, to assist us in case any of the horses should sink in the snow.

The following morning I crossed the Dyrafjord. The mountains on either side of the bay present one of the most romantic and irregular scenes imaginable. They are every now and then transversed by deep vallies, which

give the most of them an insulated and pyramidal form; and their strata, forty or fifty in number, are piled one above another in the most perfect order. Similar geologic appearances pervade the whole of the north-western peninsula, though not in the same grand and interesting style as in the neighborhood of this bay. The name of Western Friths, is very appropriately given to this part of the island, for it consists entirely of bays, separated from each other by ridges of bold projecting mountains, and resembles nothing more exactly than the shape of the human hand.\*

After passing some dangerous morasses, I arrived at the parsonage of Hollt, reckoned one of the best livings in the west of Iceland, where I met with the most polite and cordial reception from Sira Thorvaldr Bödvarson, and was immediately introduced into his study, which I found well stocked with books in different departments of science. On the table lay the Vicar of Wakefield, together with a Danish and English Lexicon; a proof that my host was pursuing the study of the English language. He is a learned man, and a good poet, but excels in sacred poetry; many beautiful specimens of which are in the hands of his countrymen. He has translated a number of Gellert's poems, and several of Pope's. The Messiah, in particular, is well executed, an autographical copy of which I have in my possession.

My object in penetrating into the Syssel of Isaiford was to pay a visit to the Dean, and make the necessary arrangements with him for the distribution of the Scriptures; but on my arrival at Hollt, I was disappointed to find, that, owing to the immense quantity of snow with which the mountains to the north of the Onundarfjord were covered, it was absolutely impossible to cross them, though now about the middle of June. The only means, therefore, in my power, of making provision for supplying the inhabitants of these distant regions, was to settle the business with the Sysselman who lives at Hiardarhollt, at a short distance to the west of Hollt. I accordingly rode

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\* In conversation one day with a Dutch Captain, who had long frequented the western friths, he presented me in a moment with a chart of them, by laying his hand flat on the table, and traced the navigation from the Faxafjord round his thumb into the Breidafjord, then past his foremost finger into Tàlknaiford, &c. till he had got round the principal bays.

on to that place in the afternoon, accompanied by Sira Thorvaldr, and was happy to find the Sysselman, Mr. Ebenezer Thorsteinson, enter cordially into the plan, and willing to do his utmost to promote its execution. We were hospitably entertained at his house, and returned in the evening to Hollt.

The inhabitants of this part of Iceland being almost entirely excluded from intercourse with foreigners, retain perhaps more of the original Scandinavian customs than those of the other parts. They are not only more tenacious of the traditions which have been delivered to them by their ancestors, but they apply themselves with greater diligence to the transcription of the written or printed sagas, the greater part of which many of them have learned by heart, and they are almost all capable of expatiating on the excellence or turpitude of the leading actions in the story. What particularly struck me, was their long patriarchal beard ; and I am certain that if I had fallen in with them in any part of the continent of Europe, and it had not been for the fairness of their hair, I should have taken them for Polish Jews.

On the 13th of June I again left the parsonage of Hollt, where I had experienced every possible attention, and commenced my return towards the south.

The mountain-road I found much more dangerous than on my passage north, especially a steep precipice on the south side of the mountain, below which is a profound chasm, where numbers have lost their lives. Here I myself had a very narrow escape ; for as we crossed a sloping bed of ice, directly above the chasm, my horse fell with me, yet endeavored to save himself by allowing the hinder part of his body to swing downwards, and sprawling with his forefeet in order to stop his progress. After sliding down with me to the distance of five or six yards, and only a few moments appeared to separate me from eternity, I providentially succeeded in extricating my feet from the stirrups, and, making a sudden leap, reached a part of the ice, partially covered with snow, where I was enabled to retain my hold. The poor horse, after sliding a few yards further, also stopped, but being unable to raise himself, he kept a firm hold of the ice with his forefeet, trembling violently at the danger to which, by a natural

instinct, he knew he was exposed. In this situation he remained till the guide and I got some ropes tied round his head, when, sensible of our aid, he immediately rose, and by a few daring leaps ultimately reached the snow.

On putting into the bay the following morning, I could not but remark that the people turned the boat the contrary way to what I expected they would have done, from the position in which she lay; when I was informed that the Icelanders universally turn the boat with the sun,—a custom which, my informer observed, had most probably its origin in superstition. That he was in the right I was afterwards more fully convinced on discovering, when I witnessed, on one occasion, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, that when the communicants rose from the railing of the altar where they had knelt, such of them as were stationed on the left side of the altar, wheeled round to the right, whereas it would have been more natural for them to have turned about to the left. This incident would, in all probability, have escaped my notice, had it not been for some young people who were not initiated into this mechanical movement, and were about to leave the altar in the natural way, when they were ordered back again, and taught how to perform the evolution. In like manner, when a funeral procession leaves the church, it must always go round the north side, even supposing the grave to be on the south side of the burying-ground.\*

On my return, I pursued for some distance a more di-

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\* About a hundred years ago the same superstitious custom of making a turn sun-ways was in common practice among the inhabitants of the western islands of Scotland. "The natives of Colonsay are accustomed, after their arrival in Oronsay isle, to *make a tour sun-ways* about the church before they enter upon any kind of business."—"Some of the poorer sort of people in these islands retain the custom of performing these rounds *sun-ways*, about the persons of their benefactors three times, when they bless them, and wish good success to all their enterprizes. Some are very careful, *when they set out to sea, that the boat be first rowed about sun-ways*; and if this be neglected, they are afraid their voyage may prove unfortunate." See MARTIN'S *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, pp. 243, 118. See also pp. 7, 16, 20, 119, 140, 242, 277. Dr. Edmonstone informs us, that the Zetland fisherwomen, to this day, deem it unsafe to turn their boat but with the sun, vol. ii. p. 73. Similar superstitious ideas obtain in the north of Europe, and may be traced to the ancient Grecian superstition, according to which the left hand side was accounted unlucky, and of evil omen. It is also worthy of notice, that the Jews gave to the evil spirit, or angel of death, the name of *Summael*, which is of like import with the Hebrew word denoting the left hand,

rect route than before. I reached the coast at Briâmslæk, where I immediately ordered a boat to be got ready to carry me over to Flatey. As it was some hours, however, before the people could be collected, I repaired, during the interval, to a ravine in the mountain behind the parsonage, which exhibits one of the most interesting displays of *surturbrand* to be met with on the island.

Compared with others in the vicinity, the mountain is but of inconsiderable height, not appearing to rise to an elevation of more than 600 feet. A torrent from the rising hills behind has cut its way through the different horizontal strata of which it is composed, so that a cleft presents itself between forty and fifty yards in depth. The east side of this cleft is entirely covered with debris, except at some particular spots, where rugged masses of a yellowish tuffa tower above the surface ; but the west side is more perpendicular, and consists of ten or twelve strata of *surturbrand*, lava, basalt, tuffa, and indurated clay, successively piled above each other. The *surturbrand* is undermost, and occupies four layers, which are separated from each other by intermediate beds of soft sand-stone or clay. These layers are of unequal thickness, from a foot and a half to three feet, and run to the length of about thirty yards, when they disappear in the debris. They differ also in quality : the two lowest exhibiting the most perfect specimens of mineralized wood, free from all foreign admixture, of a jet black ; and such pieces as have been exposed to the sun shine with great lustre, and are very splintery in their fracture. The numerous knots, roots, &c. and the annual circles observable in the ends of the trunks or branches, removed every doubt of the vegetable origin of this curious substance. The only changes it has undergone are induration and compression ; having been impregnated with bituminous sap, and flattened by the enormous weight of the superincumbent rocks. Some few branches stretch at times across the bed, but in general they all lie parallel with one another, and are frequently pressed together, so as to form a solid mass. The third stratum is not so pure, being mixed with a considerable portion of ferruginous matter ; grey externally, but black in the fracture, has no lustre, and is much heavier than the former, yet possesses evident traits

of its vegetable character. The fourth or uppermost stratum consists of what the Icelanders call *steinbrand*, or coal, from which it differs only in the absence of the gloss, and its containing a quantity of earthy matter. It still retains some faint marks of wood.

Remarkable as the appearance of this rock-wood undoubtedly is, a still more surprising phenomenon makes its appearance between the second and third strata, viz. a bed of dark grey schistus, about four inches in thickness, that admits of being divided into numerous thin plates, many of which possess the tenuity of the finest writing paper, and discover on both sides the most beautiful and accurate impressions of *leaves*, with all their ramifications of nerves, ribs, and fibres, in the best state of preservation. The whole of the schistose body is, in fact, nothing but an accumulation of leaves closely pressed together, and partially interlaid with a fine alluvial clay. It is also worthy of notice, that when you separate any of the leaves from the mass, they are uniformly of a greyish or brown color on the surface, and black on the opposite side. Most of those on the specimens now before me are of the common poplar. A few birch and willow leaves are also observable, but very small in size: whereas many of the poplar leaves are upwards of three inches in breadth.

It would appear from the accounts of Olafsen and Povelsen, as also from those of Olavius, that a bed of *surturbrand* extends through the whole of the north-western peninsula. It is chiefly used by the natives for the smithy; but as it is very hard, and susceptible of a high polish, they also make tables of it, and other ornamental articles of household furniture. It is only, however, in the damp houses of the Icelanders, that such specimens can be preserved, as they crack and split when exposed to the heat of the fire or the sun.

Scouting the idea of a subterranean forest as too absurd to merit the slightest consideration, there are only three ways in which we can suppose the *surturbrand* to have originated. *First*, Large forests may have existed in this quarter of the island at a remote period, and may have been overturned and entombed during some of the volcanic revolutions of subsequent date. *Secondly*, It may

be the remains of drift-timber, conveyed hither from rivers in North America, or from the northern coasts of Siberia. Or, *lastly*, It may have grown in a former world,\* and been reduced to its present state in one of the great catastrophes which have so materially changed the surface of the earth.

The name and black carbonated appearance of the fossil, together with the circumstance that lava is always found in greater or less quantities in the vicinity of the strata which it forms, would almost seem to favor the first of these suppositions ; but it is self-evident, that had the wood ever been in actual contact with the lava, it must either have been entirely consumed, or, if the fiery torrent had lost too much of its heat to produce that effect, it must, nevertheless, have thrown the trees about in the wildest disorder, and could never have left them in the regular longitudinal position they at present occupy. This regularity of position, which obtains throughout the whole extent of the strata, presents an insuperable argument against the *surturbrand*'s having been reduced to its present state by the operation of fire, though it cannot be denied, that this element has subsequently effected, in part at least, the disposition of the substances that rest above it.

We must, therefore, have recourse to water, as the agent by which the principal disposition of the *surturbrand* has been effected. The idea of its having originally been drift timber forcibly suggests itself, when we reflect, that those parts of Iceland in which it is most abundant, are the very tracts where the greatest quantity of timber is annually thrown up from the sea. Nor can the height to which the stratum of *surturbrand* rises, form any objection to this hypothesis, as ancient drift-timber has been found partially interred at the distance of 3000 feet from the beach. The leaves found at Briâmslæk are confessedly unique, as nothing similar occurs, in conjunction with the brand, elsewhere on the island.

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\* Lest this expression should offend any of my readers, I beg it to be understood in the sense of *the world that then was*, of Peter, 2 Epist. iii. 6; though Gen. x. 25, renders it extremely probable, that besides what took place at the deluge, our globe was subjected to another important revolution in the days of Peleg : for it is worthy of observation, that the verb *phalag*, properly signifies to *disrupt*; to sever or divide with violence.

However, as the *surturbrand* is found in such immense quantities, and where it makes its appearance on one side of a mountain, it uniformly occurs, nearly about the same level, on the opposite side ; as these mountains are of the more regular kind, consisting of numerous horizontal strata ; and as, in many instances, fifteen or twenty of these strata are piled above the bed of mineralized wood, the theory will be freest from embarrassment that refers its entombment to one or other of those dreadful elemental conflicts to which the terraqueous globe has repeatedly been subjected. It formed perhaps part of the forests that grew on the sunk continent that now supports the Atlantic, and which, on the submersion of that continent, must have been completely overturned, and carried in various directions, according to the motion of the currents. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact, that the bed of *surturbrand* in the west of Iceland, runs uniformly in the direction of N. E. by N. N. E. ; and however broken and separated by the intervening bays and vallies, forms one continued stratum in the crust of the earth. That it is found to dip in some places more than others, is a necessary consequence of the earthquakes and volcanic derangements of subsequent date. The occurrence of trees, and other vegetables, in coal formations, is well known to miners, and all who possess any acquaintance with geology ; and it certainly deserves consideration, that *surturbrand* occurs in the coal mines of Faroe, embedded in a yellowish alluvial formation, resembling the tuffas of Iceland.

Crossing the bay by way of Flatey, we reached Skard the next morning. It is inhabited by the Sysselman, Mr. Skule Magnusson, to visit whom was the object of my return to this part of Dala Syssel. Owing to the height of an adjoining mountain, there are five or six weeks in winter during which its inhabitants never behold the sun.

Mr. Magnusson was not expected home till evening ; but I was politely received by his lady, and provided with the needful refreshments. During the interval, I made an excursion of about five miles to the church and parsonage of Ballarâ, where I spent the afternoon in a very interesting manner with the clergyman, whom I found to be an enlightened and judicious man, a friend of the plain

unsophisticated sense of Scripture, and consequently an opposer of the boasted illumination of some modern theologians. In the evening he accompanied me back to Skard, where we found the Sysselman, who had just arrived, a frank, polite, and downright Icelander, with more of the appearance of a magistrate than any Sheriff I have met with on the island.

The 18th, being the Lord's day, I stopped with the hospitable family at Skard. As there was no public service, the Sysselman collected the whole of his family about eleven o'clock, and went through the exercises of domestic worship with a life and energy that I have scarcely seen equalled by any of the Icelandic clergy. What an influence the example of such a man must have in forming the manners of the inhabitants, and confirming them in those habits of devotion by which the nation has long been distinguished, and which still obtain in such parts of the island as remain free from the contamination of foreign licentiousness!

On the morning of the 19th I again left Skard, and proceeded to Hvöll, where I had left my horses on the 6th.

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## CHAP. XII.

Journey into Stranda Syssel, and return to Reykiavik—Gilsfiord—Fell—Paradise—Drift Timber—Stad—Interesting Interview with the Dean—View of the Sun at Midnight—Mount Baula—Reykholtt—Snorro Sturluson's Bath—Biographical Sketch of Snorro—Hot Springs of Reykiadal—Saurbæ—Hebrew Scholar—Hvalsfjord—Reykiavik.

HAVING rested about five hours at Hvol, I got the peasant to proceed with me into Stranda Syssel, which lies on the east or opposite side of the peninsula. For the first three hours we pursued the same road I had formerly taken along the southern shore of the Gilsfiord; and though it was now the 19th of June, I could discover no improvement in the season; the wreaths of snow appeared to possess their former bulk, and the frost and N. E. wind were equally keen. On turning the end of the bay, we struck off, through a narrow pass, into Steindals-heidi, where we had much difficulty in passing the snows, and evading the tremendous chasms which every now and then projected across the path. The mountains on both sides were of an ordinary height, and partially covered with grass, but the extreme coldness of the winds, which almost incessantly blow from the N. E. prevents vegetation from attaining any degree of maturity.

About six o'clock on the morning of the 20th, we reached a more auspicious region, the parish of Fell, consisting of a number of fruitful dales, which run up between the mountains, from the termination of the narrow but beautiful bay of Kollafjord.

Having slept a few hours in the farm-house, I proceeded along the northern shore of the Kollafjord, which is lined at various places with curious walls of basaltic rock, and came in the course of an hour to Steingrimsfjord, the

largest bay on the east side of the peninsula. It is upwards of twenty miles in length, and about ten at its greatest breadth, and has been navigated, in former times, by the Spaniards and Irish, the ruins of whose houses are still to be seen. Strange as it may appear to the inhabitants of warmer climes, and a more grateful soil, even the most distant districts of the comparatively barren Iceland are not without their *Paradise*; there being a place of that name on the north side of the bay. So true is it, that

—“ Still, even here, content can spread a charm,  
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.  
Though poor the peasant’s hut, his feasts though small,  
He sees his little lot, the lot of all ;  
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,  
To shame the meanness of his humble shed ;  
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal,  
To make him loathe his *poor* and scanty meal ;  
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,  
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.”

As I passed over the extensive plains, between the bay and the mountains, I came up to a fine large tent, which I supposed to be inhabited by a person of consequence, but after exchanging some vain guesses on the subject with my guide, we examined it, and were equally surprised and amused to find it occupied by a *cow*. The poor animal had hurt her leg, and there being no carts in use, it was impossible to convey her home to the farm. She was now nearly recovered, and on my return the following day, had actually been removed by the peasant.

Many of the plains in this quarter are suffered to lie waste, but would furnish excellent farm lands were they to undergo cultivation. Several of the farm-houses wear a very superior appearance, which may partly be accounted for by the great abundance of drift-timber, with which the shores of this bay are covered. Each farm has its division of the beach, and at stated periods the wood is removed to a sufficient distance from the water. The advantages resulting from this produce of the sea in some measure compensate for the want of native forests, and are fully appreciated by the Icelanders; so that many of the coast-places sell high, and are often held in possession, or rented by persons who live on the opposite side of the island. Besides using the wood for their own private purposes, the

inhabitants of this Syssel fabricate all kinds of small cooper-work during the winter, and thus provide themselves with a new species of barter against the summer.

I reached the parsonage of Stad about nine o'clock. From the different accounts that had been given me of the Dean, Sira Hiallte Jonson, I was led to form a very high idea of his character, but on becoming personally acquainted with him, my expectations were not only met but greatly exceeded. His external appearance was in no respect different from that of the neighboring peasants, as I took him at an unawares, repairing one of his fences ; but I soon found in him, not only the kind, hospitable, and unassuming Icelander, but the consistent Christian, and the enlightened, zealous, and indefatigable servant of Jesus Christ. His learning is that of the Skalholt school, increased by private application, and the improvement of his time since leaving that seminary, in studying the Scriptures, the ways and operations of Providence, and the different phenomena of mind and matter, as discoverable within the sphere he occupies. His theological system is that of Luther, to which he has undeviatingly adhered, notwithstanding the manifold temptations which the scepticism and infidelity of modern times have thrown in his way. The duties of the Dean's office are chiefly confined to the secular part of the ecclesiastical state in Iceland ; but Sira Hiallte, though strictly conscientious in his discharge of this part of his office, views it merely as the subordinate and less important part. His primary concern is the advancement of the spiritual and eternal welfare of the clergy and people committed to his charge, which he seeks by every means in his power—preaching the word in season and out of season, charging, admonishing, rebuking, &c. He also undertakes long journeys, for the purpose of catechising youth, and inspecting the state of his parishes, and maintains in his own family habits of piety and religion.

The Stad family forms almost a congregation of itself, consisting of not fewer than twenty-eight persons, to provide for whom requires no small share of prudent economy. It is worthy of notice, that Mrs. Jonson derives her descent from one of the kings of Ireland, through the line of a family which settled here at an early period of Icelandic

history. In no part of the world do we find a people more tenacious of genealogical descent than the natives of this distant island ; nor is there perhaps a people that have it more in their power to ascertain its degrees with accuracy, as they have always been animated by a spirit of literary research, and are in possession of a number of written monuments which enter into the minutest detail of the family transactions of their ancestors.

On the 21st I was under the necessity of bidding adieu to the interesting and pious family of Stad. The Dean himself, and one of his sons, did me the honor to accompany me two days' journey to the southward. The good man entered with his whole soul into the plan of the Bible Society, and hailed the present opening of Divine Providence as the dawn of a glorious day to the Icelandic church.

Returning by the way of Fell to Bæ, I then parted with the excellent Dean, at noon, on the 23d. The Sysselman accompanied me a few miles, and then engaged a young man to guide me through the desert tract which occupies the intermediate space between the north country and the Syssel of Borgarfjord in the south.

We set out for the mountains about seven o'clock in the evening, and continued gradually to ascend till near twelve at night, when I was favored with the most novel and interesting midnight scene I ever witnessed ; the sun remaining as if stationary a little above the horizon for about half an hour, when he again commenced his ascent, and pursued his steady, undeviating course, through the northern hemisphere.

At first I was afraid I should have been denied this gratification ; for, after lingering for a long time above the high mountains in the remote tracts of the Stranda Syssel, he at last dipped behind them, but as I rode on, and still gained a higher part of the desert, I was agreeably surprised to observe the shadow of my horse on the height before me, and turning round, I found that the sun had again left the mountains, and now appeared almost close to the surface of the ocean. Not being certain whether he might not have dipped during his absence, I kept my eye steadily fixed upon him, when I found that he still continued to decline, but when within a very little of the

horizon, he remained in the same degree of altitude, only going forwards, and as mentioned above, again began his ascent in the course of half an hour.

Though my curiosity had already been highly gratified in contemplating the multiplicity of surprising phenomena which this island presents to the view of the traveller, I felt myself compelled to assign the prospect now before me an important place in my assemblage of wonders. Close by, towards the west, lay the "Giant's Church," an ancient volcano, the walls of whose crater rose in a very fantastic manner into the atmosphere, while the lower regions were entirely covered with snow; to the south and east stretched an immense impenetrable waste, enlivened on the one hand by a number of lakes, and in the distance by vast ice-mountains, whose glassy surface, receiving the rays of the *midnight sun*, communicated a golden tinge to the surrounding atmosphere; while, towards the north, the long bay of Hrutfjord gradually opened into the ocean. Here the king of day, like a vast globe of fire, stretched his sceptre over the realms of night—divested indeed of his splendor, but more interesting, because more subject to view. The singing of swans on the neighboring lakes added to the novelty of the scene, and called forth ascriptions of praise to Him whose "works are all made in wisdom," and tend in one way or another to magnify his glory, and advance the general welfare of created being.

As I continued my journey, the train of my meditation fell upon that sublime passage in the prophet Isiah, where, describing in prophetic anticipation the future prosperity of the church, he declares, "*Thy sun shall no more go down*, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. lx. 20. In the spectacle I had just beheld, the prophetic image itself was fully unfolded to my view; and the contemplation of the universality and perpetuity of Divine Light, in connection with the means at present so effectively used for its diffusion throughout the world, animated me to devote myself afresh to the work of the Lord, and, in reliance on grace from above, to contribute, to the utmost of my power, towards the impartation of that light to every human soul.

The tract now began to slope towards the south country ; and, after crossing a stream of lava, we descended to the banks of the Nordurâ, which we forded repeatedly, now riding on the right, and now on the left side of the river. About seven in the morning we reached the farm of Hvam, where I pitched my tent, and slept till noon ; when finding it still too early to reload my horses, I resolved to ascend Mount Baula, a singular cone in the vicinity, which is at least 3000 feet in height, and is visible from many distant parts of the island.

On reaching its base, I was surprised to find the whole of its lower regions consisted of a singular kind of white-colored basaltes, none of which lay in their original bed, but were scattered about, and piled one above another in the wildest disorder. They are, for the most part, five and seven-sided ; some have three, and a few nine sides ; and measure from three to seven feet in length, by five and nine inches in diameter. I here scrambled for more than an hour among these broken pillars, not without considerable danger, from their loose state, and the excessive steepness of the mountain ; and the longer I continued among them, the more my curiosity was excited, to investigate the region from which they had been precipitated. However, before I had reached the elevation of 1200 feet, the mountain got shrouded in mist ; it began to blow and rain with considerable violence ; and a regard for my own safety and comfort, not any tincture of the superstition that had all the while assailed the mind of my attendant,\* prompted me to descend as quickly as possible, and seek for shelter in the tranquillity of the neighboring vale.

The Baula basalt is chiefly used for tombstones, to which it is naturally adapted, without the assistance of art.

About five o'clock I again struck my tent, and proceeded under the guidance of the peasant across the hills that lie

\* The ideas whieh the natives entertain of this mountain, are accurately depicted by Mr. Hooker : "The mountain, also, called Boula, from its great height and conical figure, formed a prominent feature in the scene : it is likewise deserving of notice, on account of the vulgar idea, that there is on its summit, (which, by the bye, has proved inaccessible to all who have attempted to reach it,) an entrance to a rich and beautiful country ; a country constantly green, and abounding in trees, inhabited by a dwarfish race of men, whose sole employment is the care of their fine flocks of sheep." *Tour in Iceland*, vol. i. p. 299.

to the south-east of Hvam. Having crossed the Thverâ, a fine salmon river, which falls into the Hvitâ, a little farther down, I gained a beautiful birch wood, which extended over a considerable flat, and on which my eye rested with considerable delight, not having seen a shrub for several weeks.

Next day I rode on to Reykholt, the ancient residence of the great northern Herodotus, Snorro Sturluson. Having crossed the Hvitâ, and struggled through a number of dangerous bogs, we entered Reykiadal, or the "Valley of Smoke," justly so named from the numerous columns of vapour which its hot springs incessantly send forth into the atmosphere.

Reykholt is at present occupied by Sira Egert Jonson, the Dean of Borgarfjord Syssel. He was also absent on our arrival, but we were made welcome by the female part of the family, and on the arrival of my baggage, I had my tent pitched on the summit of the virki,\* a circular mound of earth, forming the most eminent remains of the fortification, which, in former times, surrounded the farm. On his removing to this place, Snorro Sturluson not only repaired and enlarged the buildings, but inclosed the whole with a high and strong wall as a defence against the attacks of his enemies : for, in spite of the excellent regulations which existed during the Icelandic republic for securing individual safety, the intestine broils of the different chieftains, in which Snorro, in his time, had an eminent share, exposed the leading men to the rage and wantonness of the contending parties. The extent of the wall may yet be traced, but it is no where so conspicuous as here, where a watch-tower seems to have stood, and through which a subterraneous passage has communicated with the *Snorra-laug*, or "Snorro's Bath," situated directly at its base.

This bath, which has survived the ravages of nearly 600 years, without requiring any reparation, is doubtless, next to the Heimskringla,† the proudest specimen of Snorro's ingenuity, and forms a nobler monument than any which

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\* Hence Southwark, Icel. *Sudvirki*, the Southern fortification constructed by the Danes in the days of Ethelred, and so called because it lay on the south side of the Thames.

† Chronicles of the Kings of Norway.

the most zealous of his admirers could have erected to his memory. It is perfectly circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, and is constructed of hewn stones, which fit each other in the most exact manner, and have been joined together by a fine cement of bolus, and other matter found in the neighborhood. The floor is paved with the same kind of tophaceous stone which composes the wall, and a stone bench, capable of containing upwards of thirty persons, surrounds the inside of the bath. The water is supplied from a hot spouting fountain, situated about 500 feet in a northerly direction, in a hot morass, where numerous boiling springs make their appearance. It is conveyed by means of a subterraneous aqueduct, constructed of stones, which are cemented together in the same way as those which form the bath. On reaching the basin, the hot water is admitted through a small aperture, and when a sufficient quantity has been received, the orifice is closed up with a stone, and the water runs in its common channel down the valley. There is another opening at the bottom of the basin through which the water is suffered to run out, and the bath is by this means rendered perfectly clean. In former times it was customary for the whole family, without distinction of age or sex, to go to the bath together, and in some parts of the island it is practised at this day.

Owing to the infrequency of its use, I found Snorralaug rather in a neglected state : the water was muddy, and a quantity of soil had collected at the bottom. Having intimated a wish to bathe in it, the plug was taken out of the draining hole, and the current of hot water from Scribla was suffered to flow freely through it the whole of the night, so that on the morning of the 26th, before dressing, I stepped down to it from my tent, and had an opportunity of enjoying and appreciating to the full its beneficial luxury.

Snorro Sturluson, certainly one of the most powerful and celebrated chiefs ever Iceland produced, was born, as has already been noticed in the preceding chapter, at Hvam, in the year 1178. At three years of age, he was sent to Oddè, where he received an excellent education from Jon Loptson, a very rich and learned chief, and grandson of Sæmund Frode. Having access to the MSS.

and other antiquities belonging to the family, it was doubtless here that he laid the foundation of his Eddaic mythology, and cultivated the historical and poetic arts ; his proficiency in which afterwards procured him such a high degree of literary fame. On the death of his tutor in 1197, he left Oddè, and married the daughter of a rich priest who lived at Borg, on the western shore of the Borgarfjord, by which match he added no less than 4000 rix-dollars to the small property of 160, which was all that had been left him by his father. In the course of a few years, he not only succeeded to the inheritance of Borg, but obtained possession of several other considerable farms ; and ultimately became so powerful, that he sometimes made his appearance at the national assembly with eight or nine hundred men in his train. His learning and abilities also raised him to the office of Lögsögumadur, or Supreme Magistrate, which office he sustained at two different periods.

But the celebrity of Snorro Sturluson was not confined to Iceland. A poem which he composed in praise of Hacon Galin, a powerful Norwegian Iarl, not only procured him the favor of that prince, but paved the way for a visit to that part of the continent, about the year 1218, where he was well received by Skule Iarl, and other noble families, whose exploits had been the subject of his Scaldic muse. He was here raised to the dignity of *Drottseti*, or Lord High Marshal, with which office was afterwards combined that of Lord Lieutenant ; and, in return, he engaged to effect the reduction of his native island, under the power of the Iarl, by the mere force of his own private influence. The only apology that can be made for this traitorous conduct is, that Snorro was induced to make the proposition to prevent the island from being invaded by a military force, as he saw the Iarl was determined on its subjugation. The private feuds in which he got involved after his return, prevented him from carrying his design, if it really was sincere, into effect. These feuds, kindled for the most part by his own turbulence, ambition, and avarice, at length completely turned the tide of his fortune, and he was not only chased from the most of his estates, but obliged to flee for refuge to Norway, where he was but coolly received ; and though

he was afterwards created Earl, he found his safety so much at stake, that he again set sail for Iceland, in the year 1239, contrary to the express orders of his former patron, and took up his abode at Reykholt, where he was assassinated on the night of the 22d of September, 1241, in the 63d year of his age. His murderer, Gissur Thorvaldson, formerly his son-in-law, had received orders from Hacon, King of Norway, to bring Snorro over as a prisoner; and if this could not be effected, to take away his life: but having an eye to his estates, he resolved at once to adopt the latter measure.

The *Heimskringla*, or Chronicle of the Kings of Norway, for which we are indebted to the pen of Snorro, is a master-piece of historical composition, and not only embraces the internal affairs of the Scandinavian kingdoms, but throws much light on the political state of the rest of Europe, especially that of the British islands. The Copenhagen edition of 1777, 1778, 1783, and 1813, in four volumes folio, with a Danish and Latin version, is the best. There is also every reason to conclude, that our historian collected and arranged the mythological fables and poetic phrases, of which the more recent or prosaic Edda is chiefly composed; as it is certain he is the author of the *Háttalykill*, or Clavis Metrica, which contains specimens of Scandinavian poetry in a hundred different kinds of verse, most of which appear to have been invented by Snorro himself.

In a clear day, and calm weather, the view from Reykholt is rendered peculiarly interesting, by the prodigious clouds of vapour which ascend from various parts of the "Valley of Smoke;" and which, at first sight, would almost lead a stranger to conclude, that a volcanic eruption had actually commenced in the vicinity. As the Dean was not expected home before evening, Mr. Jonson and I made a short excursion in the valley, for the purpose of surveying the springs.

We first visited the Sturlu-reykia-hverar, situated close to a farm of the same name, about two miles below Reykholt. The principal spring is remarkable for its three apertures, the lowest of which serves as a conduit for the boiling water, while the two that are situated a little higher up answer the purpose of steam-pipes, through which the

vapor makes its escape during the discharge of the water. This, of all the springs I have met with in Iceland, most resembles a steam-engine. When an eruption is over, it intermits, and the water sinks out of sight for the space of about fifteen seconds; after which, the engine is again set in motion, the steam rushes out of the two apertures, with a loud hissing noise, and a considerable quantity of water is discharged. It is seldom that the eruption continues longer than a minute.

We now proceeded to the Tungu-hverar, which lie at the distance of a mile farther down, on the same side of the valley; and as the wind blew the smoke directly upon us, it was not without some danger that we approached them. Having cautiously leaped over a rivulet of boiling water, I took my station in front of the springs; but, ere I was aware, I was nearly suffocated with hot and dense vapors, which so closely surrounded me, that I could neither see my companion, nor how to make my escape from the spot on which I stood. At the distance of only a few yards before me roared not fewer than sixteen boiling cauldrons, the contents of which, raised in broken columns of various heights, were splashed about the margins, and ran with great impetuosity in numberless streamlets down the precipice on which the springs are situate. What augmented the irksomeness of my situation, was the partial darkness in which the whole tract was enveloped, so that it was impossible for me to form any distinct idea of the terrifying operations that were going on before me. After the wind had somewhat abated, the vapors began to ascend more perpendicularly, and I again discovered Mr. Jonson, who was in no small degree concerned about my safety.

Having re-crossed the scalding rivulet, and joined my companion, we ascended the eminence, on the east side of which the kettles are situate, where we supposed it would be possible to have taken a full view of them; but the steam being blown down upon them by the wind, they were almost entirely eclipsed. The whole of the eminence consists of several layers of red, blue, and white bolus, which is so soft, that a pole may be thrust into it with ease, and so hot, that it is impossible to hold one's hand more than an inch or two beneath the surface. In

the vicinity of the springs, the bolus has been considerably hardened by the action of the hot water, and appears to be forming into jasper.

After examining a number of boiling springs on the opposite side of the valley, some of which erupt the water with considerable violence, we repaired to the "River Spring," so called because it is situated in the middle of the river which divides the valley. Here, on the summit of a small rock about eight or ten feet in height, are three orifices full of boiling water, two of which project the water with violence into the air, and send forth such a quantity of steam as nearly to cover the river, though of considerable breadth. We endeavored to measure the depth of the holes, but owing to their irregularity, the plummet could not sink farther than twenty feet. Singular as the situation and appearance of this spring is, the traveller is still more surprised to observe from a line of steam rising from the surface of the river, that a vein of boiling water forces its way through the very bed into the cold stream; but, indeed, the whole valley seems to be transversed in various directions by subterranean excavations, the water in which is heated by some common conflagration.

On the 27th, after having made the necessary arrangements with the Dean relative to the circulation of the Scriptures, I took leave of the family at Reykholt, where I had been treated with distinguished kindness, and prosecuted my journey.

About six o'clock in the evening we reached the church and parsonage of Saurbæ, on the northern shore of the Hvolsfjord, where we were made cordially welcome by the incumbent, an aged man of seventy-four. To whatever part of this surprising island the traveller may turn, he is sure to meet with some phenomenon or other, either of a physical or moral nature. Here, at a small farm capable only of affording pasture to a few sheep and cattle, and with a stipend of about thirty rix dollars *per annum*, I was not a little astonished to find a man who had read more of his Hebrew Bible than hundreds of the more opulent clergy in Great Britain. Nor is it less surprising, that he had already gained his sixtieth year ere he entertained any idea of studying the original language of the

Old Testament. He was induced to commence this study with the view of satisfying his own mind in regard to the true sense of Scripture, being convinced, that this was the only way in which he could determine whether the translation given in the Icelandic, or that contained in the Danish Bible, was the most consonant to the original. Having, through the kindness of Bishop Vidalin, been provided with a small Hebrew Grammar, the excellent large-lettered edition of the Hebrew Bible by Opitius, and Simonis' Hebrew Lexicon, he applied with ardor to his task, and was able in a short time to read the historical books with ease. The psalms next claimed his attention; and he is now able, with the assistance of the lexicon, to resolve even the most intricate parts of the Hebrew text to his own satisfaction and edification. He has also written out beautiful alphabets of the Syriac and Arabic languages, and composed a pretty extensive glossary in Latin, English, French, and German. As he hears with difficulty, it was impossible for me to converse much with him; but he soon took occasion to express his happiness at the supply of Bibles that had been sent to his countrymen, and rejoiced to hear of the progress of true religion in different parts of the world.

I left Sorbæ the next day, and arrived at Reykiavik about three o'clock in the morning of the 29th of June, within a single day of the period I had fixed before setting out on my journey.

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## CHAP. XIII.

Handels-tid, or Period of Traffic—Mode of Travelling to Market—Exports and Imports—The interest kept up by the National Assembly—Its Abolition—Formation of the Icelandic Bible Society—Letter from its Secretary—Salmon Fishery.

TOWARDS the end of June the Icelander begins to make the necessary preparations for his journey to the factory, or mercantile establishment, at which he is accustomed to trade. By this time the horses of burden are again fit for use ; the sheep have had the woollen fleece torn off their backs ;\* the roads are passable ; and, till the setting in of the hay harvest, no particular branch of rustic labor calls for the presence of the peasants. To accommodate them, factories are established by the Danish merchants at different distances around the coast, whither the majority repair ; but as there is seldom more than one mercantile house at each station, many of the Icelanders prefer a journey across the deserts in the interior to Reykiavik, where, from the number of houses, there is a kind of competition, and, at all events, they have here the liberty of choice, which, in their estimation, is a matter of no small importance. The prices are generally fixed by the merchants before-hand ; yet, in order to obtain a full cargo, they sometimes depart from the rule, and raise the prices towards the end of the market.

It is the duty of the Landfoged and Sysselman to examine all the weights and measures in the shops, before

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\* In Iceland the sheep are not shorn as with us, but are suffered to go out till the wool begins to fall off, when they are gathered into a pen, and it is literally torn off with the hand. By this means much of the wool is lost, and what remains in the fields is very seldom picked up, even by the shepherds.

the summer traffic commences ; and should any be found defective, the owner is liable to a fine.

On setting out for the trading station, the Icelanders load their horses exactly in the manner described at the beginning of this Journal ; and such of them as visit the south, generally proceed thither in companies ; so that about this time it is no uncommon thing for travellers to meet with caravans, consisting of sixty or seventy horses, in the deserts of the interior. As they pass along, they amuse themselves by relating the incidents of the preceding winter, or take occasion, from local monuments, to repeat and comment on the stories of ancient times. When they reach the vicinity of Reykiavik, they do not proceed instantly with their goods to the market, but encamp on the green spots to the east of the town, where I have more than once fancied myself among "the travelling companies of Dedanim." Isaiah xxi. 13. Sometimes upwards of an hundred tents, and several hundred horses, may be seen here at the same time. Those belonging to the same farm or neighborhood always pitch their tents close together, and surround them with the baggage to prevent the wind from penetrating below the wadmel which forms the covering of the tent. Their object in not proceeding at once to the market, is to prevent the merchants from gaining an undue advantage over them, by getting possession of their goods before they have had time to ascertain the prices. They therefore leave all to the care of their servants at a sufficient distance, and ride into the town alone, when they go to the different shops, and, after having made the necessary inquiries, agree with the merchant who offers them the best terms, or shows himself the most friendly and obliging in his behaviour. It is to be observed, however, that this custom is chiefly confined to such peasants as come from a distance, and are independent of the merchants ; the great majority stand on the debtor side of the shop-books, and are kept in a kind of slavery the whole of their lives. Indeed, it appears to be a fundamental principle of the Icelandic trade, to keep up a number of outstanding debts, in order to secure the future commodities of the individuals on whom they are chargeable. Should any of them be de-

tected in dealing with another merchant, he is instantly threatened with prosecution.

The principal exports are fish, salted mutton, oil, tallow, wool, and woollen stuffs, skins, feathers, and sulphur. The chief articles of import, are rye, barley, oat-meal, pease, bread, potatoes, rum, brandy, wine, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco, salt, wood, iron, flax, lines, hooks, indigo, cotton and silk handkerchiefs, &c. The use of tobacco and coffee, as articles of luxury, has of late increased in a degree very disproportioned to the circumstances of the natives. They seldom smoke tobacco, but are excessively fond of chewing it, and prefer it as a present to any thing that might be offered them.

Ever since the abolition of the Althing, or National Assembly, in the year 1800, the annual fair at Reykiavik presents the only opportunity the natives now enjoy of meeting with one another, or transacting any business of mutual or public concern. But it furnishes only a poor substitute for that interesting occasion. As long as they continued to assemble at Thingvalla,\* the Icelanders maintained a spirit of liberty and national independence ; and though subjected, during the later periods of their history, to the sceptre of a foreign monarch, yet that sceptre has been swayed over them with so much mildness, that it was impossible for them to be conscious of any deterioration in their condition as the result of this change. They delighted to visit a spot where the wisdom and eloquence of their ancestors had long been illustriously displayed ; where their admirable constitution had been established, their laws framed, their magistrates elected, and all the various concerns of the nation finally adjusted. The contemplation of the natural scenery, too, by which they were surrounded, was calculated to revive in their remembrance the characters and events of other days ; while, at the same time, they had an opportunity afforded them of conversing together about the occurrences of the preceding winter, and of confirming those habits of friendship and intimacy which had been formed among them. In a word, the period of concourse at Thingvalla formed a grand annual festival ; and, when it is considered that

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\* See p. 37.

the sober dispositions of the Icelanders, and the remoteness of the place where they met, proved effectually preventive of the riot and licentiousness which too frequently characterize public meetings in other countries of Europe, it is impossible not to feel indignant at that policy which abolished an institution of such high antiquity, and which furnished so innocent a source of gratification to every uncontaminated Icelandic mind.

How different the scene presented in the streets of Reykiavik ! There being no inns for their accommodation, and their tents being at some distance, you see the few natives who frequent the place, lounging about the corners of the houses, or visiting one or another of the factors, by whom they are regarded with disdain ; and the only attention they receive is for the sake of the gain expected to accrue from their transactions as customers. They feel themselves to be strangers, and dejection and disappointment are marked in every countenance. I never recollect to have mentioned this subject to an Icelander, who did not keenly reprobate the innovation ; and their sorrow on account of it is only equalled by the indignation produced by the reflection, that the change was effected by one of their own countrymen.

One of the principal objects of my visit to Iceland, and of the different journeys which I undertook through the several districts, was to impress the minds of the natives with a sense of the importance of forming a Bible Society for their own island ; the object of which should be to provide its population with a constant supply of the Holy Scriptures in their vernacular language. It gave me pleasure to find, that the proposal met with the cordial approbation of all to whom I communicated it ; and they were of opinion, that the period of traffic would be the most convenient time for carrying my purpose into effect. I therefore brought the matter formally before the bishop, on my return to Reykiavik, when I received the assurances of his patronage ; and the rest of the public authorities, at the same time, promised their countenance and support.

Accordingly, on the 10th of July, at the annual meeting of the Diocesan Synod, which was held in the Cathedral, a sermon was preached on the subject by the

Reverend A. Helgason, in which he forcibly set forth the importance and utility of Bible Societies, expatiated with much feeling on the vast operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society in particular, and the plenitude of success with which these operations had been crowned ; gave a brief view of its exertions in behalf of Iceland ; and concluded by exhorting the Synod to co-operate in this common and glorious cause, and embrace the present opportunity of founding a similar institution for the island of Iceland.

After service, the Synod proceeded to the discussion of their usual business, and, in the afternoon, adjourned to the Episcopal Hall, when the Archdeacon, and the Dean of Oddè, were deputed to call at my lodging, and conduct me to the meeting. It was cause of universal regret that the Bishop was not able to be present, having been taken ill the preceding evening. Besides the assistance of the Archdeacon, and the Deans of Oddè, Hruna, and Reykholt, the meeting was favored with that of the acting governor, Justiciary Einarson, and Mr. Thorsteinson, member of the Court of Exchequer in Copenhagen. The nature and object of Bible Societies having been distinctly stated, and the promise of pecuniary aid from the British and Foreign Bible Society having been given to the meeting, it was unanimously resolved that a Society should be formed ; but, on deliberation, it appeared most eligible, in consideration of the absence of many of the natives, whose approbation and support were considered to be absolutely necessary to the success of the plan, that the meeting should only lay the foundation of the Society, and postpone its full organization till next meeting of Synod ; and that an invitation to all the inhabitants of Iceland, to come forward in aid of the institution, should be drawn up, and signed by the principal civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and circulated, before the winter set in, throughout the island.

Thus, in the good providence of God, the preliminary steps were taken for the establishment of an institution, which, by his blessing, may be instrumental in perpetuating the treasures of Revelation to numerous Icelandic generations yet unborn.

On information being received by the Committee of the

British and Foreign Bible Society, of the formation of the Bible Society in Iceland, the sum of £300 sterling was voted by that body, to aid the funds of this infant institution; and the following is a letter of thanks from its Secretary, addressed to the Committee of the Parent Society in London:—

*"Reykjavik, March 2, 1817.*

" We gratefully adore the kind providence of God, who, in withholding from us some portion of earthly good, has yet, with a bountiful hand, dispensed to us his blessings. Among these we acknowledge, as by far the most excellent, the gift of his divine religion, which enables us, at once, to supply the want of temporal comforts, and to provide for our eternal welfare. And you, our kind helpers, who, by your example and benefactions, have caused the streams of life to flow among us, not only more freely than heretofore, but with a perpetual current, we regard, on this account, as the delegates of Divine Providence, and shall highly esteem you as long as the Divine Word is in honor among us; as long as the eternal welfare of our souls is dear to us.

" You have sent to us the treasures of our divine religion. The Rev. Ebenezer Henderson, who came among us, authorised by you, has largely distributed these excellent gifts of your bounty. He has, moreover, induced us to consult our own welfare more diligently than in time past in this important respect, by establishing a Bible Society in our own island.

" On our part, we gladly obeyed the suggestion, fearing only that our circumstances may not prove equal to this pious undertaking; but here again you come to our aid, tendering, in a letter to our President, Bishop Vidalin, the large sum of £300, for the supply of our spiritual need. Words are wanting to express our gratitude for this act of munificence, whether we consider the greatness of the gift, the pious intention which dictated it, or the end which it is destined to serve.

" Indeed we are unable to thank you as we ought; and can only entreat the bounteous Giver of all good to bestow upon you a recompense worthy of your piety. May He graciously prosper your excellent intentions, and so aid

us in our design, that you may never have cause to regret your liberality ! May the knowledge and obedience of his divine religion daily increase, and be confirmed among us, by which we may approve ourselves more and more to you our benefactors ! This prayer, the pious effusion of our hearts, will be heard, we trust, on high !

" It is due to you, to whose aid and example we are indebted for the whole, that we inform you of what has hitherto been done among us ; and, in the first place, (as we are persuaded nothing will rejoice your hearts more than the success of your own labors,) we may inform you, that we have framed our rules, and appointed officers for the management of our business, on the model of your august Society. We have elected for President, our Bishop, the Right Rev. Geir Vidalin ; for Vice President, Isl. Einarson, Counsellor of Justice ; our Treasurer is S. Thorgrimson, Receiver General of the island ; and our Secretary, Pastor A. Helgason. The chief person in each district, assisted by the clergy under him, has the care of our affairs within his province.

" We have given a general invitation, by circular letters, to all the inhabitants of our island to join in this momentous work ; and we heartily rejoice, and are sure you will rejoice with us, in the good disposition which is every where manifested ; insomuch, that not only poor fathers of families, but even male and female servants, come forward with their little contributions. We cannot as yet say what is the amount subscribed ; the extent of our island, the almost impassable state of the roads, and, above all, the inclemency of the climate in the winter season, obstructing the means of conveyance. We trust, however, through Divine assistance, that even among us, there will appear, in due season, some fruit of your labors ; that even in this world, you will be blessed with this recompense, in part, of your piety, while the fulness of reward is reserved for you in eternal life.

" Farewell, our benefactors ; we pray most fervently to Almighty God to bless you."

" Subscribed, by order of the Bible Society in Iceland,  
by A. HELGASON."

As the inhabitants of Iceland are not in any immediate want of a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, though, from the constant use they are making of the copies which they have recently received, there is every reason to believe it will not be long ere it will be called for, the attention of the Committee of the Icelandic Bible Society is, in the first instance, directed to a proper revisal of their present translation, which is universally allowed to labor under very considerable imperfections. The Bishop has already prepared some of the Gospels; the revision of the Acts has been undertaken by Justiciary Einarson; and several of the Epistles are in a state of forwardness by Steingrim Jonson, Gutterm Paulson, and other individuals distinguished for a critical knowledge of the original.

It must certainly prove in a high degree gratifying to all the friends of the Bible Society to learn, that to no quarter of the globe could their exertions have been directed with a greater probability of success than to Iceland, as the inhabitants of that remote island were evidently prepared by the Spirit of God for the reception of his blessed word; and to no instance within the vast compass of the Society's operations can the observation of the Apostle with more justice be applied: "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God, while, by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 12—15.

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The only other incident worthy of notice, as happening about this time, is the taking of the salmon in the Hella-râ, or Salmon River, a few miles to the east of Reykiavik. Having been apprised that the quantity of salmon caught at this place is sometimes immense, I accompanied my friend Mr. Hodgson to the spot. As we rode along, we overtook numbers of Danes and Icelanders of both sexes, and many of them accompanied by their children, all re-

pairing to the river ; on our arrival at which, we found a great concourse assembled to witness the sport, or assist in taking the fish. The Hellarâ, as its name imports, is very cavernous : a stream of lava having been poured down the gulley through which it runs ; and in these caverns the salmon find admirable strong holds, in which to secure themselves against their pursuers. Before the proper season they are only partially caught by means of large wooden boxes placed in front of the small waterfalls ; but, on this occasion, one of the branches of the river, which divides into two arms a little above this spot, is dammed up, and the whole quantity of water is diverted into the other channel some hours before the catch begins. The other branch, which contains the salmon, is then drained as much as possible, by some stones being taken out of the barrier by which it had been damned up.

On a signal being given by the proprietor, a number of men rushed into the water that remained, with a large net, and coming directly down upon the salmon, caught a great quantity at the first draught. This operation was repeated till all the salmon were taken. The whole number taken in the course of five hours amounted to upwards of nineteen hundred. Sometimes nearly three thousand are taken in this way in a single forenoon. The greater number of those caught on this occasion were small, but some of them weighed twenty-five pounds. In the river Hvítâ salmon are sometimes taken which weigh forty pounds. That river, and many others in Iceland, which abound in this excellent fish, are divided among the neighboring peasants : but the Hellarâ belongs to his Danish Majesty.

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## CHAP. XIV.

Skialdbreid Volcano—The remarkable Cavern of Surtshellir described—Arnarvatn—Desert—Bewildered in a Fog—Hot Springs of Hveravellir described—The Rustic Astronomer.

IT being still necessary for me to visit some of the clergy, and others in the north of Iceland, I set out once more from Reykiavik, on Tuesday the 18th of July, in company with Messrs. Thomson and Brorson, two gentlemen from Holstein, who intended to explore some remarkable spots in the interior. The first day's journey lay across the same lonely tract I passed last year, till we arrived at the western shore of the Thingvallavatn.

Next morning we left Thingvalla, from which we had been richly supplied with trout and cream, and proceeded in a northerly direction across the lava, which everywhere exhibited tremendous parallel rents, and prevented us from advancing with the celerity we could have wished. Having skirted for some time the immense stream of lava that has been poured down in this direction from Mount Skialdbreid, we came to the beautiful plain of Hofmannaflot, which is covered with rich grass, and where the original occupiers of the tract are said to have held their feasts of athletic prowess amid hundreds of spectators.

We had now to climb a very steep and narrow pass, having a conical mountain of small basaltic lava on our right, and several irregular tuffa hills on the left; and after descending into an extensive sandy plain, in which lay a large lake of white water, we came to the western margin of the lava, on the opposite side of which rose the volcano Skialdbreid, or “Broad Shield,” so called from its striking resemblance to that ancient weapon of defence. It may be about 3000 feet of perpendicular height, yet

rises with so gradual an ascent, that, were it not for its lavas, a carriage might proceed up its surface with the utmost ease. Its base describes a circle of at least thirty miles. The crater, at its summit, is distinctly visible; and all around its sides, and across the surrounding plains, nothing is visible but the lava which it has poured forth in every direction.

Passing to the west of the volcano, we arrived about three in the afternoon at a small grassy spot, where we were in expectation of getting something for our horses; but the caravans that had recently passed this way had eaten it completely bare: however, as we had a long stony desert before us, it was necessary to unload the horses for a few hours at this place. At six o'clock we recommenced our journey. On every hand we were surrounded by mountains of perpetual snow and ice; the road lay at times across immense heaps of snow, and not a patch of vegetation was perceptible in any direction. Had it not been for the fineness of the weather, the ride must have been absolutely intolerable.

About two o'clock on the morning of the 21st we pitched our tent within a short distance of the remarkable cavern of Surtshellir, which, after a few hours' sleep, we proceeded to explore. A small path made by those whose curiosity prompts them to visit the cavern, directed us to the spot, where we found a heap of stones, on an elevated part of the lava, serving the purpose of a mark. On our arrival at this place, we descended into a large chasm, which has been formed by the falling in of the crust of lava; and directly before us, towards the south, yawned the entrance of the gloomy abode of darkness, measuring about 40 feet in height, by 50 in breadth; which dimensions it retains for more than two-thirds of its length, which has been ascertained by admeasurement to be 5034 feet. All round the entrance were large heaps of stones which have fallen down from the roof; scrambling over which we came to a large heap of congealed snow, and descended to the margin of a long pool of water, the bottom of which consisted of ice; but as the water was excessively cold, and would have taken us past the middle, we returned in the hopes of being able to discover a more convenient aperture. We had only proceeded a short way across the lava, when we

came to another vast chasm, formed in like manner by the falling in of the roof; but as the walls were nearly 30 feet of perpendicular height, and we had no ropes with us, we saw no possibility of descending, and therefore advanced still further in search of a third. After spending an hour in fruitless pursuit, we retraced our steps to the second opening, when one of our party, more adventurous than the rest, succeeded in getting down, and was followed by all of us, except the clergyman, who, being rather corpulent, durst not make the attempt. However, as he was equally desirous of seeing the curiosities of the cavern, he returned to the first aperture, and resolved to ford the deep water, notwithstanding his being the shortest of any of us. Solicitous, if possible, to save him this trouble, we entered that part of the cave from the inner end, and fortunately discovered a crust of lava running longitudinally along the right-hand side, which was just broad enough for our friend to walk upon, while he suspended himself in a great measure, by the knobby and stalactitic lavas above.

One of our servants, who had followed us to the spot, could not on any account be prevailed on to accompany us into the cavern. His mind was evidently tinctured with the same superstition to which the cavern owes its name. It formed one article of the ancient Scandinavian creed, that at the close of the present system of things, *Surtur*, the black prince of the regions of fire, should proceed from the south, and set the world on flames; and the original inhabitants of Iceland having fallen in with this cavern, and contemplated the awful marks of conflagration with which it is surrounded, have conceived the idea that a more proper abode could not be assigned to the genius of fire.

We now lighted our torches, and entered the cavern, which was also filled, at this place, to a considerable height with snow; beyond which we fell in with a rugged tract of large angular pieces of lava that had fallen from the vault, so that we were in constant danger of cutting ourselves, or falling into the holes of water that lay between them. Nor were we without apprehensions lest fresh masses should have dislodged themselves from the roof, and crushed us to atoms.

The darkness here became so great, that with all the light afforded us by two large torches, we were still prevented from surveying so distinctly as we could have wished, the beautiful black volcanic stalactites with which the high and spacious vault was hung, or the sides of the cave, run into vitrified horizontal stripes, that appear to have been formed by the flowing of the stream of melted stones, while its exterior parts have been cooled by their exposure to the atmosphere. After contemplating these curious productions of nature, and just as we were on the point of prosecuting our subterranean journey, we discovered a large excavation situated at some height on our right, which, with some difficulty, we reached and entered; but, after advancing about eighty feet, the roof got so low, that we could no longer walk with any degree of ease, so that we returned, and entering a still smaller subdivision, arrived again by an easy route at the main cavern.

Almost exactly facing us, on the opposite side, we des-  
cribed the entrance to two other subterranean passages of  
an immense size, which we instantly recognised as the  
asylum to which numerous banditti resorted in former  
times, and of which mention is made in the ancient his-  
torical monuments of the island. Descending into the  
cavern, we began to scale the ranipart, which is about ten  
feet of perpendicular height from the bottom of the cave,  
and succeeded in entering the excavation behind it; but  
we had not proceeded many steps, when we were arrested  
by a long stone wall, about three feet high, visibly made  
by the hand of man. It had a small door or entrance  
about the middle, through which we passed, after having  
surveyed a large circular heap of decayed bones, mostly of  
sheep and oxen, but also some of horses, which the rob-  
bers had killed for their subsistence. Within the inclo-  
sure was a room or apartment, about thirty feet in length,  
by fifteen in breadth, the floor of which was strewed with  
the finest volcanic sand, and is supposed to have supplied  
the place of beds. From this we penetrated about forty  
yards; but finding that our farther progress must have  
been purchased by wading in cold water past the knees,  
we returned to the entrance. The whole length of this cave  
is about three hundred feet; its height at the entrance,  
and a considerable way in, is about eighteen feet; and its

breadth twenty-four. The vault is hung with still more beautiful stalactites than that of the main cavern, and as they are more strongly vitrified, they reflect the light in a very splendid manner.

Having seen all that appeared worthy of observation here, we again descended from the rampart, and pursued our course into the profound chasm, which still opened in darkness before us. We were again incommoded by heaps of stones, many of which appeared to be of recent deposition ; but after having surmounted this difficulty, a still more formidable obstacle presented itself—a long tract of water, through which it was absolutely necessary for us to wade, if we would gain the inner end of the cave. It took us up to the knees, and at first seemed rather alarming, as we apprehended deep holes, into which we might precipitate ourselves ere we were aware ; but we soon found that the bottom was perfectly sound, consisting of smooth ice of amazing thickness, over which we advanced with uncommon velocity. The only thing of a disagreeable nature was the coldness of the water. Towards the termination of the ice, a large fragment of lava now and then obstructed our passage, and obliged us to seek an oblique road ; and in the course of a quarter of an hour from our leaving the rampart, we arrived at a third opening in the roof, the light admitted through which we could discover at a great distance. The cave opens at this aperture into two divisions, which are separated from each other by a narrow partition of lava ; and at the opposite end of the aperture, which is nearly half full of stones, two large holes present themselves ; but that to the left does not run farther than twenty feet, whereas the other is the continuation of the grand cavern. We had no sooner left the light of day than we came to another pool of water, through which we had to wade, but found it less deep than the two former ones, taking us only mid-leg. Exchanging this for a rough stony tract, which gave place to a fine floor of even lava, and after we had walked a long way without meeting any interruption, we could once more discover a small glimmering of light descending through the last window or aperture in the roof of the cave. This opening we found much smaller than any of the preceding ; and what afforded us no small

joy, was the discovery that the surface of the ground was attainable without the least difficulty by its northern side, as by this means we might save ourselves the trouble of returning by the mouth of the cave.

We now entered the aperture at the opposite end, and almost instantaneously found ourselves enveloped in thicker darkness than ever, but met with neither water nor stones. The floor was covered with a thick coating of ice, and dipped so rapidly, that, finding it impossible to keep our feet, we sat down, and slid forward by our own weight. On holding the torches close to the ice, we could discover its thickness to seven or eight feet, clear as crystal. It was not long till we reached a spot, the grandeur of which amply rewarded all our toil; and would have done so, though we had travelled an hundred times the distance to see it. The roof and sides of the cave were decorated with the most superb icicles, crystallized in every possible form, many of which rivalled in minuteness the finest zeolites; while, from the icy floor, rose pillars of the same substance, assuming all the curious and fantastic shapes imaginable, mocking the proudest specimens of art, and counterfeiting many well known objects of animated nature. Many of them were upwards of four feet high, generally sharpened at the extremity, and about two feet in thickness. A more brilliant scene perhaps never presented itself to the human eye, nor was it easy for us to divest ourselves of the idea, that we actually beheld one of the fairy scenes depicted in eastern fable. The light of the torches rendered it peculiarly enchanting.

Quitting this exquisite spot, we passed along the side of a double layer of ice, which was quite smooth; but being exceedingly sharp at the edge, we were frequently in danger of cutting ourselves upon it. We next encountered a miry part of the cavern, which was more solid, however, than we at first expected; and as it was even, and gradually sloped downwards, we advanced with considerable speed, till, all at once, we discovered the pyramid of lava mentioned by Olafsen and Povelsen, on which we still found one of the two silver coins deposited here by these gentlemen in the year 1753.

A considerable way without the pyramid the cavern begins to contract; and after walking about 400 feet fur-

ther, we came to the inner end, where the marks of two subdivisions appeared, but they were entirely filled up with large pieces of lava; part of which has fallen from the roof, and the rest seems to be the lava in its original bed, but cracked and disjointed by its exposure to the atmosphere.

As we had now fully gratified our curiosity, we returned to the last aperture in the vault, through which we again reached the surface of the earth, after having spent upwards of four hours under ground; but found ourselves almost suffocated with heat, on so sudden a transition from the cold and dark cavern to open day, where the rays of the sun were very strongly reflected from the vitrified lava and volcanic sand around us. It was almost the same as if we had suddenly exchanged a Greenland winter for an African summer.

At the termination of the desert of Arnarvatnsheidi, we came to the "Twelve Wards," or pillars, where the huge waste, known by the name of *Stori Sandur*, begins, which is supposed to be the highest mountain road of any on the island. According to an observation made with the barometer in 1792, it was found to be about 2212 feet above the level of the sea. As it was the object of my companions, in pursuing this route, to visit the remarkable hot springs of Hveravellir, which, according to the maps, lay only a little to the right, I resolved to proceed with them in that direction. Deceived partly by the maps, and partly by what we conceived to be columns of steam, we struck off from the road, and entered a region that had in all probability never been trod before by the foot of man. We had not advanced far, when we almost began to repent of our having taken this route, as nothing appeared, as far as the eye could reach, but a desert of sand and stones, or Alpine mountains of ever-during snow. We literally entered "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." Jer. ii. 6.

Our men, who had all along been averse to the expedition, now began to be loud in their complaints, and depicted to us, in very pathetic language, the inevitable starvation of our horses, and the risk we should run of losing our lives by the hands of robbers, with whom they

apprehended some part of this remote desert might be infested. Foreigners in general ridicule the idea of there being any people of this description in the interior, and my own favorable ideas of the character of the Icelanders prevented me from entertaining any fears on the subject; but the Chief-Justice has since told me, he certainly would not have ventured to travel through many parts that I did without pistols; and the merchants have sometimes traded with people, who, both from their appearance, and the nature of their traffic, excited strong suspicious of their being inhabitants of the desert.

About seven o'clock in the evening, we descried some beautiful green plains at the base of the ice mountains. However, the discovery created as much alarm in the minds of our servants as it afforded joy to us; for they were now sure that we would fall in with robbers, and it was not long ere they pointed out to us a number of horses feeding close to the Yökul, which at first rather shook our confidence, and inclined us to listen with some degree of attention to the proposed method of defence; but a single glance through a spy-glass converted the horses into large stones, that had been thrown down from some neighboring volcano; and we hastened forward to the plains, and encamped in the front of a small eminence, richly covered with willows, angelica, and a great variety of other botanical productions, on which our horses feasted with great avidity.

The following morning we renewed our lonesome journey, and proceeded in nearly an easterly direction towards the northern termination of the Yökul: but, after ascending a very hilly tract, and just as we approached the base of the ice, we were forced, by some deep, but dry channels, to strike off to the left, when we almost instantly found ourselves surrounded by a number of small hills, the conical form of which bespoke their volcanic origin, though they appeared to be much older than a stream of lava which runs down from the Yökul on the right, but soon stops, presenting, at its termination, a nearly perpendicular wall of more than forty feet in height. We had scarcely begun to make our observations on the geologic phenomena around us, when to our no small concern, we got enveloped in mist, which closed thicker and thicker

on every side, till at last we could scarcely see the last horse in our train. We now depended on the compass, but, on taking it out of our luggage-chest, we were astonished to find it refuse to lend us any assistance. It kept shaking and dipping towards the face, and appeared to be more strongly attracted downwards than to any of the points ; so great must have been the predominance of irony matter among the volcanic substances in the vicinity. We had no alternative left, but to follow, as well as we could, the direction we had originally pursued, and passed over immense masses of ice, in which we discovered numerous chasms of invisible depth.

After winding round the base of several hills that were partially covered with snow, and traversing wide gulleys whose surface was covered with comminuted lava, we fell in with a very ancient and extensive torrent of lava, that appeared to have its origin in some part of the northern extremity of the Yökul. Proceeding up a gulley between the lava, and a snow-mountain to our right, we entertained some hopes of extricating ourselves by this route ; but being suddenly favoured with a temporary dispersion of the mist, we had the mortification to find that all further progress was obstructed by an immense Alpine barrier which presented itself directly before us. Retracing our steps, we at last resolved to cross the lava, which we found in a state of great decomposition, and, after scrambling over it for some hours, without any further prospect of success, it appeared most advisable to follow its course, as by this means we might be conducted again into the low country. During our progress we observed several curious volcanic chimnies, but the critical nature of our situation had damped all desire of examining them. Following the rapid descent of the lava, we had the inexpressible satisfaction about seven o'clock in the evening, of seeing the mist disperse, and an almost unbounded view presented itself across the desert plains in the interior. We now made all haste to leave these inhospitable mountain regions ; and, about ten o'clock, we encamped on the banks of a small river, the name of which, (the Quiet River,) called to my recollection the words of the Psalmist : "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside *the still waters.*" Psalm xxiii. 2.

On the 24th we proceeded along the base of the low mountains on the east side of Bald Yökul, and arrived about noon at Hveravellir, or "the Plains of the Hot Springs," one of the most interesting spots in Iceland. On approaching the place, it was not without sensations of awe that we beheld the columns of smoke that were issuing from almost innumerable apertures in the surface of the ground, and heard the thundering noise attending its escape. Pitching our tents in a small but fertile gulley close to the principal springs, we devoted the remainder of the day to the contemplation of the remarkable phenomena around us.

The tract which slopes rapidly towards the east, has been a morass, but by the incessant accumulation of depositions from the springs, its surface has gradually been petrified; yet it is still in many places so soft that it requires great caution to avoid plunging into a mire of boiling clay. The space occupied by the depositions measures about 300 feet from east to west, and 344 from north to south. Within this surface are eight primary apertures, filled with boiling water, the four easterly of which do not eject their contents, but remain in a state of constant and violent ebullition. The largest of them exhibits a beautiful oval basin, which opens into several holes at the bottom, and presents to the view some brilliant but inaccessible incrustations.

The most surprising phenomenon, however, exhibited at this place, is a circular mount of indurated bolus, about four feet in height, from an aperture on the west side of which a great quantity of steam makes its escape with a noise louder than that of the most tremendous cataract. The current of steam issues forth with such force, that any stones you may throw into the aperture are instantly ejected to a considerable height. On thrusting a pole down the hole, we observed a very considerable increase both in the quantity of steam emitted, and the noise accompanying its escape. This mount is called "the Roaring Mount," from the circumstance just described.

On our arrival at Hveravellir, a violent south wind prevented our seeing the operations of the springs to advantage; but, in the evening, the storm ceased, and we were favored with a scene more brilliant and interesting than

any ever exhibited on a birth-day festivity. From an elevated part of the adjoining lava we had a grand view of the tract, and could not sufficiently admire the connection and regularity observable in the bursts of steam and jets of water that continued to ascend into the atmosphere the whole of the evening. The order they maintained can only be compared to that observed in the firing of the different companies of a regiment drawn up in order of battle. The play commenced on a signal being given by the Roaring Mount, which was instantaneously followed by an eruption of the largest jetting fountain at the opposite end of the tract, on which the turn went to the rest, vast columns of steam bursting from the surface of the general mound, while the jets rose and fell in irregular beauty. Having continued to play in this manner for the space of four minutes and a half, the springs abated for nearly two minutes, when the Roaring Mount renewed the signal, and the explosions took place as before.

The following morning, on leaving my tent, I was surprised to find a remarkable change in the appearance and phenomenon of the Grand Jetter. Instead of being full of water, and jetting at intervals, as it had done the preceding evening, the basin was completely empty, but a column of spray continued to be thrown up without intermission to the height of twelve feet, accompanied with clouds of steam, and a loud thundering noise, resembling that of the Roaring Mount, which had considerably abated in its fury. The spring continued in this state for more than three hours, when the basin again began to fill, and ultimately the same play began that we had witnessed before, only there was a remarkable diminution in the quantity of steam emitted from the mount.

Besides the steaming apertures just described, numerous rents and chasms appear in the lava towards the south for more than a mile, through which clouds of steam unremittingly make their escape, and many of them are so hot that it is impossible to approach within some yards of them. As we walked over these solfatarras, whose spiracles were scattered with such profusion around us, one of our party had nearly sunk through the crust, which, in many places, is very thin; and the accident, which proved rather alarming, was of some use to us, as it taught us the

necessity of being more cautious in selecting our steps in future.

In the middle of this burning tract, is a large surface covered with the depositions of ancient springs, that appear to have been of enormous magnitude. On the rising grounds to the east of the springs are numerous beds of blue, red, and yellow bolus, together with a multiplicity of minor apertures filled with boiling water; and even in the gulley, where we pitched our tents, the bolus was so hot, that on taking up our poles the ends of them could not be touched. It is likely we should not have slept with the composure we did, had we been sensible that we were so near the devouring element, to whose agency the operations going on around us were to be ascribed.

At the north end of the tract are still to be seen the remains of a den that has been inhabited by robbers within the last thirty years. It consists of a natural rent in a bubble of the lava, which has been so artificially closed up with broken fragments of the same substance, that no person could have supposed it to be any thing else than a common grotto in the lava. It is very conveniently situated for cooking victuals, as there is a large boiling kettle at the distance of only a few yards.

On the 25th we had such a storm from the south, that it was in vain to think of travelling before noon. My companions then pursued their course towards the south country, while I directed mine towards the north. The road lay for some hours across fields of sand and gravel, till I arrived at the vast commons belonging to the inhabitants of Hunavatns-Syssel, where numerous flocks and herds were feeding in every direction. After crossing the river Beliandi, I arrived in a short time at the western bank of the majestic Blanda, whose waters rolled heavily along to the main; and what excited no small degree of interest, was the distance to which the two rivers flowed after their junction in the same channel, ere they were actually *blended* together. The water of the former is black, whereas that of the latter, coming from Arnarfell Yökul, possesses the same whiteness with the other Yökul rivers in Iceland. The Yökul river maintained its superiority for more than three miles, when, arriving at a small cataract, the waters are completely mingled by the fall,

and the river then assumes a darker hue than it presented before.

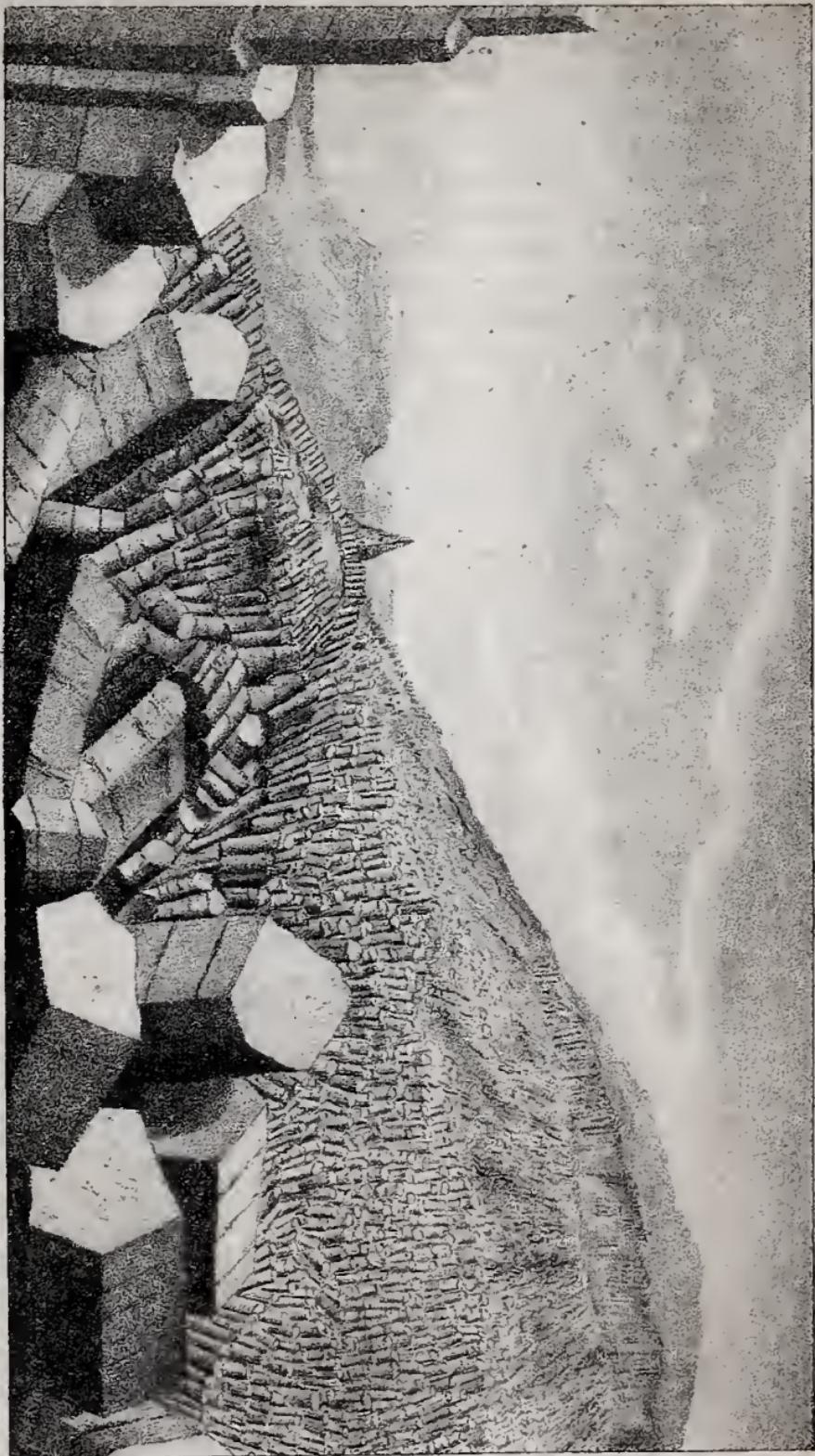
A little past midnight I pitched my tent close to the farm of Bolstad, while my mind was penetrated with feelings that can only be experienced by those who have spent several days in barren and inhospitable deserts. Next day I reached the Long Valley, in which I found some of the best looking farms I have seen in Iceland. It is clothed with rich grass, amongst which I observed a vast proportion of wild clover; the meadows are well watered, and afford plenty of hay, and the mountains yield excellent pasture for the sheep.

After pitching my tent in the evening, and just as I had begun to fill up my Journal, the arrival of a large caravan was announced, two of the conductors of which came to pay me a visit, and seemed wonderfully gratified with the sight of an Englishman, there never having been any of my countrymen in this quarter before. One of them was a goldsmith, well known in Iceland for the neatness and perfection of his workmanship, which almost rivals that of the best artists in Copenhagen, though he has never learned the trade, or been out of his native island. He has also made a watch without any assistance. The other I took at first to be of a dull and stupid turn of mind, but we had not conversed many minutes when he began to expatiate on a plurality of worlds, with an eloquence and exactitude that perfectly astonished me. "There is, for instance, *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and—" forgetting, and placing his hand on his forehead, "and ——the planet lately discovered by Dr. Herschel in London. They must be inhabited; they are of the same nature with our earth; they are not globes of fire." Though disappointed in his expectations of obtaining absolute certainty from me on the subject, he was pleased to find that I agreed with him as to its extreme probability, and regretted much that it was not in his power to visit the Doctor, as he had many questions to propose to him on this and similar topics.

On the 27th, I proceeded to Höskulstad, where I met with a hearty reception from the Dean of Hunavatns Systsel, an aged man, who has filled this office for thirty years, takes a lively interest in the spread of the Gospel, and

could not sufficiently express his gratitude for the good done to the parishes within his jurisdiction, by their having been put in possession of the word of life. All the copies that had come to the neighboring factory had instantly been disposed of; and, in some of the dales, every house had been provided with the treasure. In the evening, I rode with the Dean to Skagastrand, where I experienced the most hospitable treatment from Mr. Schram, to whose exertion the Society is indebted for the speedy distribution of the Scriptures in this quarter of Iceland.

Near Höskulstad is a most beautiful display of basaltic rocks; some of which still occupy their original positions, and others are thrown down, and lie scattered about in every direction.



EXHIBITION OF BASALTS NEAR HOSKULDSTAD.

*Tenckoeve's Lithog., Boston*



## CHAP. XV.

Leave Skagastrand—Hvam—Valley of Skagafjord—Drângey—Glaumbæ—Moelfell—Holum—Church of Urdir—Intelligent Peasant—Mödrusell—Sira Jon Jonson—His excellent Character—Forms a Tract Society—Return through the Desert—Yfri Reykum—Alstavatn—Hot Springs of Reykum—Earthquakes—Sulphur Mountain, and Springs of Krisuvik—Leave Iceland.

ON the 28th of July I again left Skagastrand, and pursued my course to the parsonage of Hvam, the occupant of which, Sira Vigfus Eirikson, is a young man of considerable abilities, and actuated by a sincere desire to do good to the souls of his fellow men. It has long been his wish, and that of many of his brethren, that an annual meeting were held in the north of Iceland, to consist of such of the clergy as approved of it, for the purpose of encouraging each other in the work of the Lord. Situated as the clergy in Iceland are,—cut off from all communication with each other, they feel little or no community of interest; the great object is apt to dwindle away even where it has once been in sight; and a deplorable apathy, if not actual apostacy ensues. Were they, on the other hand, to assemble once or twice in the year, in order to hear some of their number deliver a discourse on the duties, difficulties, encouragements, &c. of the pastoral office, it would naturally tend to stimulate them to exertion, keep alive in their minds a sense of the awful responsibility attaching to the charge they have undertaken, and produce the best effects on their respective congregations. It gave me pleasure to learn that the Dean was extremely favorable to the measure; and there is little reason to doubt, that, were the matter fairly represented

to their superiors, they would obtain liberty to carry their wishes into effect.

At noon the following day I set out with Sira Vigfus for the nunnery of Reinastad, where he intended to preach the following day. The road lay for the most part across the two mountainous tracts, having reached the summit of which, we had a fine view of one of the most fertile and populous districts in Iceland. The coast looks rugged and precipitous, and the bay itself presents to the view a number of lofty islands. The largest of these is Drângey, the sides of which are quite perpendicular, and rise to the height of nearly six hundred feet above the level of the water. Its extent is estimated at 2400 feet; and, on account of the richness of its grass, and the immense number of sea-fowl which are caught there annually, it is reckoned the most productive of any spot of the same size about the island.

On the 30th, which was the Lord's Day, Sira Vigfus preached and administered the sacrament, both at Reinastad, and the neighboring church of Glaumbæ. The congregations were large, especially at the latter place, where the church was quite crowded. His sermons, which were animated and faithful, seemed to make a deep impression on the hearers, and a great majority of them were bathed in tears while he dwelt upon the love of God to our sinful world. The inhabitants of this tract manifested the strongest desire to obtain copies of the Holy Scriptures, of which the greatest want prevailed among them. In the whole parish of Glaumbæ I was concerned to find only *three* Bibles among the population of *fifty* families.

After the conclusion of the service, I proceeded up the west side of the valley, which chiefly consists of meadow land, to Mælifell, the abode of Sira Jon Conradson, Dean of the Syssel of Skagafjord, whom I found sincerely desirous of promoting the best interests of his countrymen, and happy at the provision which had been made for the supply of their spiritual wants. His attention is much bent on the intellectual improvement of the young people within his deanery; and it forms one of the more prominent features in his official visits, to examine into the degree of their progress in the acquirement of religious knowledge. The anticipation of distributing the Scriptures

among them the following season afforded him great delight.

Next morning, after maturing a plan for supplying the poor with copies of the Scriptures, I left Mælifell, accompanied by the Dean, and directed my course to the ferry of Grund, where I crossed the river without any difficulty. At first sight I took the ferryman for an Italian, as he was more swarthy than any Icelander I had seen; but on inquiry I found that he was a native of this district, but had served both in the Danish and Austrian armies, and borne his part in two engagements against Napoleon. An invincible attachment to his native soil prompted him to relinquish all the advantages which were offered him in more favored climes; and the attention paid him by his countrymen, who listen most eagerly to the minutest circumstances of his story, affords him a source of gratification which he could not have expected among strangers.

At the farm and church of Urdir, where we arrived on the third of August, as it was impossible to pitch my tent, on account of the storm, the peasant persuaded me to lodge all night in the church. On my remarking to him, that in my native country it was not reckoned any honor to sleep in church, he very smartly replied, that it was deemed equally disgraceful among them to do so in the day-time; but he was certain there could be no harm in sleeping there during the night. I now took possession of the place, which, I was happy to find, was in a good state of repair, and entirely free from draught; and proceeded without delay to fit up my bed, which could only be accomplished by tying the one end of my hammock to the railing which surrounded the altar, and the other to a pillar supporting the pulpit in the middle of the church, which was only about twice as long as my hammock.

Of the intelligence and general information of the peasant, I was furnished with a most surprising proof the following morning. Finding that he took a very lively interest in the success of the British and Foreign Bible Society, I gave him a brief view of the extent of its operations; and read to him the very interesting letter addressed by the King of Persia to Sir Gore Ouseley, relative to the new version of the Persian New Testament. Having mentioned that it was dated in the year 1229, a little boy,

who was standing beside us, observed, that "it must be a very old letter." "No, my lad," replied the peasant, turning to him, "you must recollect that letter is not written according to our computation; it is dated agreeably to the *Hegira*."

After making an excellent breakfast on boiled rice and milk, I prosecuted my journey, and arrived on the morning of the 5th, at the parsonage of Mödrufell, where I received a most cordial welcome from the worthy incumbent, Sira Jon Jonson.

I had seen this excellent clergyman in 1814; but his extreme modesty, and the shortness of our interview, rendered it impossible for me to form any adequate idea of his character or abilities. From the manner, however, in which he adverted to the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and the anxiety which he discovered about the advancement of vital piety among his countrymen, I could easily perceive that he was actuated by a very different spirit from that by which the great majority of professing Christians are influenced; and encouraged him to carry into effect a plan which he had formed with a view to the circulation of religious tracts throughout the island. In the course of the winter I received two very interesting letters from him, informing me that he had followed my advice, and had succeeded in the formation of an Icelandic Tract Society, to which he had obtained upwards of three hundred subscribers; and that the plan was patronized by Conferenceraad Thorarinsson, the deputy-governor of the north. He was waiting with impatience for my arrival; and we now spent two days together in the most interesting and agreeable manner. I found in him a man of sterling piety, apostolic simplicity, and anxious solicitude about the welfare of his fellow-men, and possessed of scriptural and comprehensive views of divine things. His acquirements as a scholar are very considerable, and have, together with the consistency of his character, procured for him the regard and esteem of his superiors, and indeed of all who are acquainted with him. The management of the affairs of the Tract Society could not have been vested in better hands; and much good may be expected to result from the circulation of such tracts as are written or revised by this worthy friend of truth.

The good man was quite delighted with the accounts I gave him respecting the numerous institutions which had recently been established for extending the benign influences of the moral reign of Jesus among the sinful inhabitants of our globe. They were as cold waters to a thirsty soul. His eyes sparkled with joy as he told me of his intention to impart the same intelligence to his countrymen ; that such of them as felt interested in these things might be partakers of his joy, and that it might excite many to serious reflection, who rested in the cold formalities of nominal Christianity.

On the 8th, I was under the necessity of bidding a long farewell to this devoted servant of Christ, and his equally pious and interesting family. Accompanying me to the upper end of the valley, and procuring for me a guide to proceed with me as far as the first station on the road leading into the interior, he returned to his humble abode, with a heart, I doubt not, overflowing with gratitude to God for all the wonderful things he had heard on this occasion.

The following morning I once more abandoned the habitations of men, and entered the dreary and inhospitable regions through which I passed on my way to the north in 1814, and which are described in the former part of the Journal. The guide conducted us across the Yökulsâ, at no great distance to the south of which I pitched my tent for that night ; and the fog in which we had been enveloped having cleared away next morning, he returned, and I proceeded with my servant and the horses into the interior. We had not proceeded far, however, before the fog again thickened around us, and completely hid from our view the mountains on either side, from which we were to take our bearings of the direction in which we were to travel. This circumstance proved the more alarming, as the servant had never travelled this way before, and I had only traversed the region once myself; add to which, the entire effacement of the track in many places, owing to the melting of the winter snows. However, by proceeding, as nearly as we could, straight forward, we always found it again ; and before dark we had fairly passed the south-western termination of the Yökul. We had still a ride of nearly fifteen miles ere

we could reach the smallest patch of vegetation, most of which we performed in the dark. At times we began to fear that we might miss it, and then the painful recollection forced itself upon my mind, that upwards of thirty miles lay between us and the next green spot in our route. About nine o'clock we had the inexpressible pleasure of finding the sand give place to the grass and willows of Grâna ness, where I instantly tented, and, after partaking of some refreshment, retired to rest, greatly fatigued with the long ride, but enjoying, perhaps, a greater share of tranquillity of mind than I should have done had I been in the midst of the most populous city.

On the 11th the heavens were clear and serene. I started at an early hour, and pursued my journey to the northern bank of the Hvítâ, where I halted a short time for the sake of the horses; and then fording the river, ascended the rising ground which terminates in Blâfells-hâls, having reached which, I could again descry the Geysers sending forth vast columns of steam into the atmosphere; and inviting me once more to the contemplation of the wonders of nature, which are exhibited in that quarter of Iceland.

Though it got dark before I left the desert, I succeeded in finding the path which leads to Holum, and experienced, on my arrival at that place, all that kindness and hospitality which the general appearance of its inhabitants, the preceding year, had led me to expect. The following morning I proceeded to the Geysers, where I spent two days. The result of the observations I made during this visit, I have already inserted in the former part of the Journal.\*

On the morning of the 14th I left the Geysers, and taking the eastern road to Reykiavik, arrived on the 15th at the church of Reykium, a little to the north of which, I pitched my tent, at the distance of a few yards from the most considerable of the hot springs with which the tract abounds.

Having dined, I devoted the evening to the contemplation of the natural wonders of the place. From below the church, a valley, or rather a wide gulley, stretches

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\* See p. 47, note.

back to the distance of some miles between the mountains, and exhibits in the extensive banks of hot sulphur and clay, and the numerous columns of steam which rise into the atmosphere in every direction, the most convincing proofs of the conflagration which is still going on at no great depth in this part of the island, while the volcanic appearance of the mountains and rocks in the vicinity leads back the mind to ancient scenes of devastation and ruin.

The largest jetting spring is known by the name of Geyser. It has two apertures through which the water and steam make their escape; the more southerly of which continues to spout incessantly, and throws the water to various heights of from three to twelve feet; but the other aperture, which is only separated from it by a distance of ten feet, is the more remarkable of the two. It is surrounded by an incrusted brim; and a large stone, which has been precipitated from the mountain, lies directly across it, owing to which the water is prevented from rising to that height which it might otherwise attain. Notwithstanding this obstruction, however, the eruptions, which take place about fifteen times in the twenty-four hours, are carried with amazing velocity, and a tremendous noise, to the height of at least thirty feet; and the vast clouds of steam which make their escape along with the water, add greatly to the interest of the scene. While the eruption lasts, which is generally about three or four minutes, an immense quantity of water is discharged by the spring; and to judge from what I witnessed during my stay there, I should suppose that the quantity at present discharged cannot be inferior to what it was in the year 1789, at which time Mr. Baine found the quantity of water thrown up every minute to be 59,064 wine gallons, or 78.96 cubic feet.

In the vicinity, a great number of boiling springs, and steaming apertures, make their appearance; and it requires no small degree of courage to walk among them, as it is impossible to say how thin the arch of clay may be which separates you from the boiling abyss below. In many parts beautiful banks of variegated bolus present themselves; and I had the satisfaction of contemplating the interesting process of the formation of what appeared to be jasper, from its soft state in the bolus, till it has

gone through all the degrees of induration, and ultimately become so hard that it will strike fire from steel.

About half a mile farther up the valley, and on the same side with the springs just described, appears a huge chasm filled with boiling water, from the south side of which a spring throws out the water in a direction perfectly horizontal, emitting at the same time a great quantity of vapor, and bellowing with a very disagreeable noise. At a short distance to the north of this, is a large break in the ground, which has evidently been formed by the roof of one of the excavations having given way with which the earth is perforated at this place. In the middle of this hollow, which may be about fifteen feet below the general surface of the ground, lies a large pool of turbid water, from which a considerable column of the same liquid is almost uninterruptedly thrown to the height of nearly twenty feet.

On passing from this spot along the left bank of the river, I was surprised to find steam issuing from within the margin, and, on examining the place, I found that several springs existed in the very bed of the river; and the quantity of boiling water which they threw up was so great, that it could not be kept under by the cold water above it, but forced its way through the stream in a very amusing manner.

Early on the morning of the 16th I was alarmed by an uncommonly violent eruption of the Geyser, the water of which was carried to a much greater height than I had observed it the preceding day, and fell in part with a tremendous dash directly upon my tent. Availing myself of a momentary suspension of its operations, I rushed out, and taking my station at a convenient distance, I contemplated with amazement the immense quantity of water which continued to be poured forth for upwards of a quarter of an hour.

Of the dreadful physical evils to which Iceland is exposed, scarcely any are more alarming than earthquakes. Many of these awful convulsions of nature have not been recorded in the annals of the country; yet the number they do exhibit is more than sufficient to excite feelings of the most tender commiseration for its inhabitants in the breast of every friend of humanity.

The first of which any notice is taken, happened in the

years 1181 and 1182 ; but we are not informed of any bad effects resulting from them. In 1211, the year in which the first mention is made of an eruption from the submarine volcano near Reykianess, numerous earthquakes happened, in which several lives were lost, and the houses, in many parts of the island, completely thrown down. In the years 1260 and 1261, severe shocks were felt in the island of Flatey, in the Breidafjord. In 1294, the ground rent in Rângârvalla Syssel ; the Rângâ river changed its course ; a number of farnis were overturned ; and, for the space of eight days, all the wells were white as milk. In the year 1300, during an uncommonly violent eruption of Heckla, earthquakes were very frequent in the south of Iceland, and many houses were thrown down. They were repeated with still greater violence eight years afterwards, when eighteen farms were destroyed.

In 1311 a still more dreadful earthquake took place, by which not fewer than fifty-one cottages were thrown down, or entombed ; and so great was the darkness occasioned by the sand and ashes thrown up by some of the volcanoes, that it was impossible to travel from one part of the island to another. Among other severe calamities to which the inhabitants were subjected in the year 1313, was an earthquake in which eighteen houses were destroyed. In 1339, severe shocks were felt throughout the southern quarter of the island ; farm-houses were overturned ; men and cattle were raised from the ground by the violence of the shocks ; several of the mountains disrupted and fell ; the earth rent to a great depth ; and among other collections of boiling water which made their appearance, was a hot spring, sixty feet in diameter, which broke forth in the mountainous tract, a little to the east of Mossfell. In the year 1370 an earthquake happened, in which twelve farms in the district of Olsus were totally destroyed.

In 1390 and 1391 numerous shocks were felt, especially in the latter year ; fourteen farms were destroyed, and several people buried in the ruins.

In 1552, a severe earthquake was felt, but no damage was done by it ; and in 1554 the shocks were continued with such violence for the space of a fortnight, that the inhabitants durst not risk their lives in their houses, but were obliged to live in tents. Several shocks were felt in

the year 1578; and in 1597 an earthquake again overturned a number of farms in the district of Olfus. In 1614, severe shocks were repeated almost uninterruptedly the whole of the autumn; the consequence of which was, that a number of houses were thrown down. During the winter of 1633 the farms in Olfus were again destroyed; and the rockings were so incessant, that in many of the churches there was no service almost the whole of the winter. In 1657 and 1661 very severe shocks were experienced in different places, particularly to the south-east of Heckla, and a number of houses were levelled with the ground.

Most tremendous shocks were felt in the districts of Olfus and Floa on January 28th, April 1st and 20th, 1706. Not fewer than twenty-four farnis were destroyed; the provisions of the inhabitants spoiled, and many of the cattle killed.

As the eruption of the Skaptár volcano was the most dreadful of any recorded in the annals of Iceland, so the earthquakes which happened on the 14th and 16th of August, 1784, which was the year after the eruption, were by far the most destructive of any ever felt by the inhabitants of that island. Though the principal scene of its devastation appears to have been about the districts to the west of Heckla, it was nevertheless felt over the whole island. In the Syssel of Arness alone, not fewer than three hundred and seventy-two farm-houses were damaged; sixty-nine were entirely subverted; and sixty-four received so much injury that they could not be inhabited. The number of houses that were thrown down, throughout the island, amounted to one thousand four hundred and fifty-nine; upwards of two hundred were partly subverted, and three hundred and thirty greatly injured. The churches which were damaged amounted to nineteen, and of these four were completely overturned.

Besides the damage done to the houses, the grass-lands suffered much injury from the rents which were produced, the changing of the course of the rivers, and the immense quantities of rock and gravel which were thrown down from the sides of the mountains. Many of the old boiling springs were closed up; and others appeared, from which the water was thrown to a great height. At the Geysers,

near Haukadal, not fewer than thirty-five new springs made their appearance.

In the year 1789, another dreadful earthquake happened, the shocks of which only intermittent at first for the space of ten minutes, but were continued more sparingly a considerable part of the summer. A number of wide rents were formed in the earth; and among other remarkable phenomena attending this earthquake, was the change which took place in the lake of Thingvalla. The bottom of this lake sunk towards the north-east, and the water being precipitated thither, encroached considerably on the land, and in many places overflowed the ancient road which ran in that direction; whereas, the lake became so shallow towards the south-west, that it was now almost dry where there had been formerly four fathoms water.

In 1808 a violent shock was felt, which made some alteration in the mechanism of the hot springs; but no devastation whatever followed. The last concussion that was observed in Iceland took place in the month of June, 1815; but it was very slight, and was felt only in the northern parts of the island.

It was my intention to have visited the tract between Reykium and Cape Reykianess, before leaving the island; but as the ships were nearly ready for sailing, I was obliged to abandon the idea, and hasten to Reykiavik. The following description of the Sulphur Mountain and hot springs in that dismal volcanic region, as given by Sir George Mackenzie,\* cannot fail highly to interest every reader.

"At the foot of the mountain, (about three miles distant from Krisuvik,) was a small bank, composed chiefly of white clay, and some sulphur, from all parts of which steam issued. Ascending it, we got upon a ridge immediately above a deep hollow, from which a profusion of vapor arose, and heard a confused noise of boiling and splashing, joined to the roaring of steam, escaping from narrow crevices in the rock. This hollow, together with the whole side of the mountain opposite, as far up as we could see, was covered with sulphur and clay, chiefly of a white or yellowish color. Walking over this soft and

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\* Travels in Iceland, p. 115.

steaming surface, we found to be very hazardous; and I was frequently very uneasy when the vapor concealed my friends from me. The day, however, being dry and warm, the surface was not so slippery as to occasion much risk of our falling. The chance of the crust of sulphur breaking, or the clay sinking with us, was great, and we were several times in danger of being much scalded. Mr. Bright ran at one time a great hazard, and suffered considerable pain from accidentally plunging one of his legs into the hot clay.\* From whatever spot the sulphur is removed, steam instantly escapes; and in many places, the sulphur was so hot that we could scarcely handle it. From the smell, I perceived that the steam was mixed with a small quantity of sulphurated hydrogen gas. When the thermometer was sunk a few inches into the clay, it rose generally to within a few degrees of the boiling point. By stepping cautiously, and avoiding every little hole from which steam issued, we soon discovered how far we might venture. Our good fortune, however, ought not to tempt any person to examine this wonderful place, without being provided with two boards, with which any one may cross every part of the banks in perfect safety. At the bottom of this hollow, we found a caldron of boiling mud, about fifteen feet in diameter, similar to that on the top of the mountain, which we had seen the evening before; but this boiled with much more vehemence. We went within a few yards of it, the wind happening to be remarkably favorable for viewing every part of this singular scene. The mud was in constant agitation, and often thrown up to the height of six or eight feet. Near this spot was an irregular space filled with water, boiling briskly. At the foot of the hill, in a hollow formed by a bank of clay and sulphur, steam rushed with great force and noise from among the loose fragments of rock.

"Further up the mountain, we met with a spring of cold water, a circumstance little expected in a place like this. Ascending still higher, we came to a ridge com-

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\* Mr. Hooker appears to have been in an equally perilous situation near this place; for he informs us, that in endeavoring to avoid one of the sulphureous exhalations, he jumped up to his knees, in a semi-liquid mass of hot sulphur and bolus, and should probably have sunk to a greater depth, had he not instantly thrown himself with his whole length upon the ground, so as to get his hands on a more solid soil. *Tour*, vol. i. p. 240.

posed entirely of sulphur and clay, joining two summits of the mountain. Here we found a much greater quantity of sulphur than on any other part of the surface we had gone over. It formed a smooth crust, from a quarter of an inch to several inches in thickness. The crust was beautifully crystalized. Immediately beneath it we found a quantity of loose granular sulphur, which appeared to be collecting and crystalizing as it was sublimed along with the steam. Sometimes we met with clay of different colors, white, red, and blue, under the crust; but we could not examine this place to any depth, as the moment the crust was removed, steam came forth, and proved extremely annoying.

"Below the ridge on the farther side of this great bed of sulphur, we saw a great deal of vapor escaping with much noise. We crossed to the side of the mountain opposite, and found the surface sufficiently firm to admit of walking cautiously upon it. We had now to walk towards the principal spring, as it is called. This was a task of much apparent danger, as the side of the mountain, for the extent of about half a mile, is covered with loose clay, into which our feet sunk at every step. In many places, there was a thin crust, below which the clay was wet, and extremely hot. Good fortune attended us; and we reached, without any serious inconvenience, the object we had in view. A dense column of steam, mixed with a little water, was forcing its way impetuously through a crevice in the rock, at the head of a narrow valley, or break in the mountain. The violence with which it rushes out is so great, that the noises thus occasioned may often be heard at the distance of several miles; and, during the night, while lying in our tent at Krisuvik, we more than once listened to them with mingled awe and astonishment.

"It is quite beyond my power to offer such a description of this extraordinary place, as to convey adequate ideas of its wonders, or its terrors. The sensations of a person, even of firm nerves, standing on a support which feebly sustains him, over an abyss where, literally, fire and brimstone are in dreadful and incessant action; having before his eyes tremendous proofs of what is going on beneath him; enveloped in thick vapors; his ears stunned

with thundering noises:—these can hardly be expressed in words, and can only be well conceived by those who have experienced them.”

Having taken leave of the Bishop, and the rest of the public authorities in Reykiavik, from all of whom I had experienced the kindest and most unwearied attentions during my stay in Iceland, I embarked on the 20th of August, on board a Danish vessel, bound for Copenhagen. As we stood out from Reykiavik, and the land began to recede from my view, I was conscious of strong feelings of regret, which not even the anticipations necessarily connected with my return to the continent of Europe were able fully to repress. I was leaving an island, distinguished by its natural phenomena from every other spot on the surface of the globe, where I had been furnished with frequent opportunities of contemplating and admiring some of the more sublime displays of the wisdom and power of God in the operations of nature. But what principally attached me to Iceland, was the exhibition of moral worth, and the strong features of superior intellectual abilities, which had so often attracted my notice during the period of my intercourse with its inhabitants. My thoughts were also directed to the effects which were likely to result from my visit. I had circulated extensively among them that blessed Book, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; which alone contains an authenticated, complete, and most satisfactory revelation of the character, purposes, and will of the Supreme Ruler of the universe; and directs the guilty sons of Adam to the only possible way in which they can obtain true and lasting felicity. And while I reflected on the responsibility which attaches to the situation of such as are favored with this revelation, and the aggravated guilt and coadmnation of those who receive not the truth in the love of it that they may be saved, my earnest prayer for the Icelanders was, that they might have grace communicated to them from above, to enable them suitably to improve the inestimable privilege which had been conferred upon them.



